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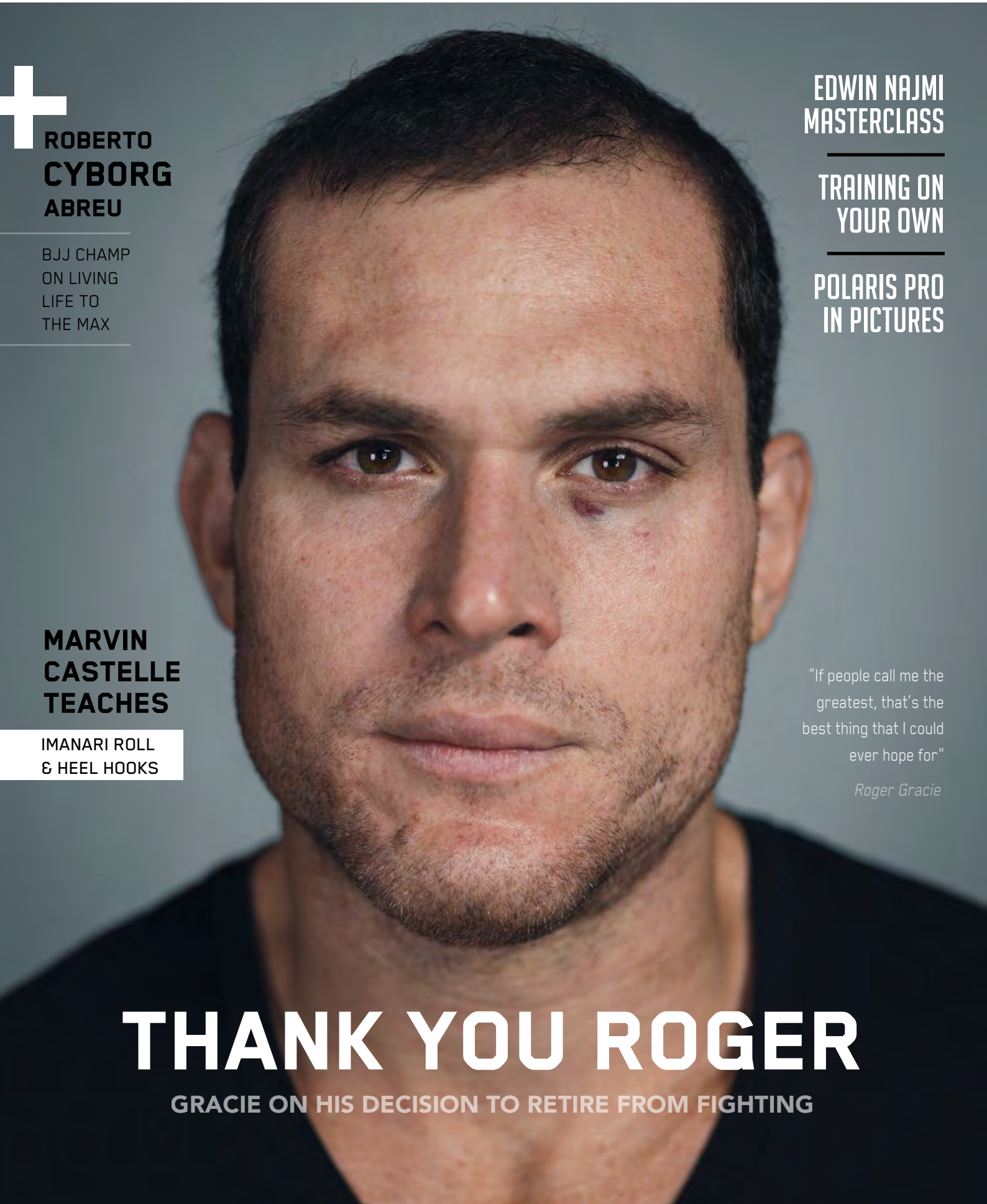

+ ROBERTO CYBORG ABREU

BJJ CHAMP ON LIVING LIFE TO THE MAX

EDWIN NAJMI MASTERCLASS

TRAINING ON YOUR OWN

POLARIS PRO IN PICTURES

MARVIN CASTELLE TEACHES

IMANARI ROLL & HEEL HOOKS

"If people call me the greatest, that's the best thing that I could ever hope for"

Roger Gracie

THANK YOU ROGER

GRACIE ON HIS DECISION TO RETIRE FROM FIGHTING

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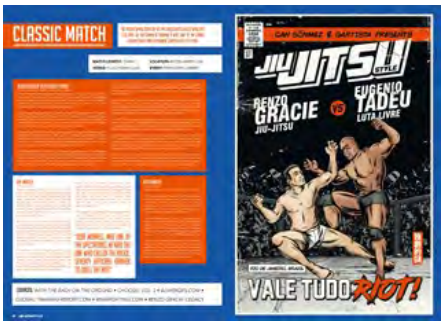

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JIU JITSU STYLE

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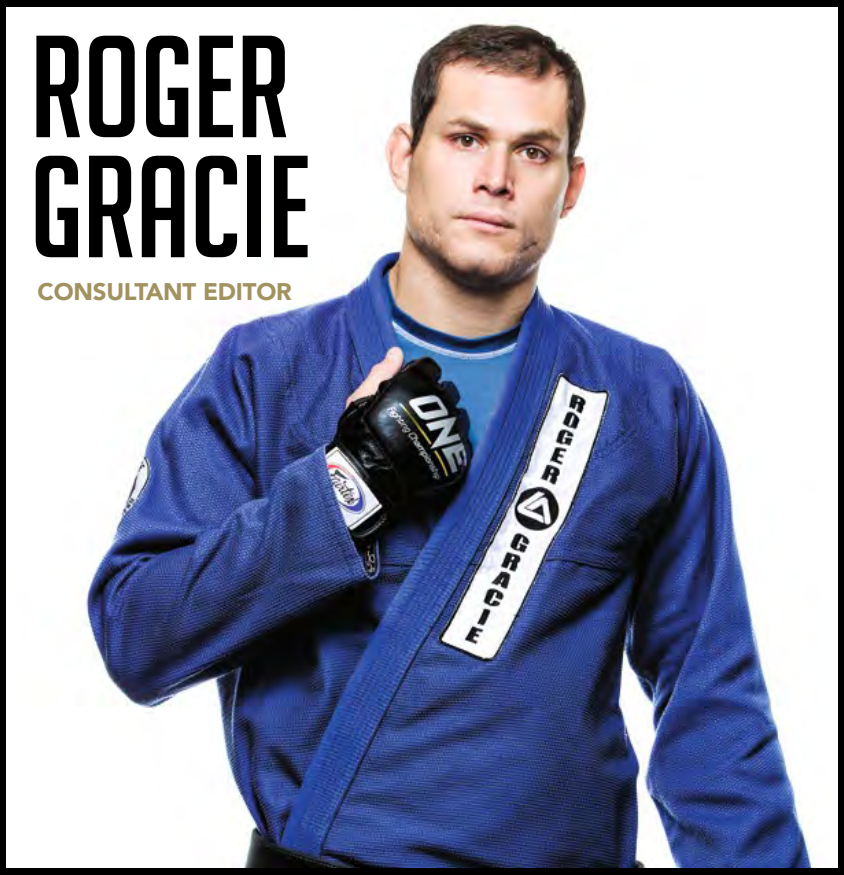
ROGER GRACIE

CONSULTANT EDITOR



"I AM SOMEONE WHO NEEDS MOTIVATION AND CHALLENGES TO WANT TO COMPETE, AND NOW I JUST DON'T FEEL THERE'S ANYTHING LEFT THAT WILL DO THAT FOR ME"

It's strange to be writing this column knowing that I have now retired from fighting. Since our last issue, I competed against Buchecha at the Gracie Pro in Rio, my hometown, and to pick up the victory is the perfect sign-off for my career.

To be honest, I really don't know if I could ever have imagined the last fight to be any better. It was in my hometown, where I'd not fought for 11 years, it was against the current best jiu jitsu athlete in the world, and I managed to win via a submission.

I am someone who needs motivation and challenges to want to compete, and now I just don't feel there's anything left that will do that for me. If I competed again, I don't think I'd be the Roger Gracie I want to be, so I know that now is the right time to call it a day and sign off from jiu jitsu and MMA. It's been a crazy career, with plenty of highs and lows, but it's one I wouldn't have changed for the world.

Obviously, I recognise the cover star for this issue! It was a pleasure to sit down and discuss my thoughts and experiences leading up to my final match, and I hope you gain an idea of my values and ideas for our art as it continues to grow.

Many people have asked me what I plan to do with myself now that life as an athlete is behind me – the truth is I am still working that out! One thing I do know is that I am looking forward to teaching more and supporting my students who want to compete and achieve their goals in jiu jitsu; that is something that really excites me for the future. Other than that, let's see what happens for me.

We have a great feature interview with Roberto Abreu in this issue also, and 'Cyborg' is a fighter I have a lot of respect for. He actually visited my academy right before my fight with Buchecha and we got some training in, which was very cool. Make sure you pay attention to this interview, as Cyborg has a very healthy outlook on jiu jitsu and life in general.

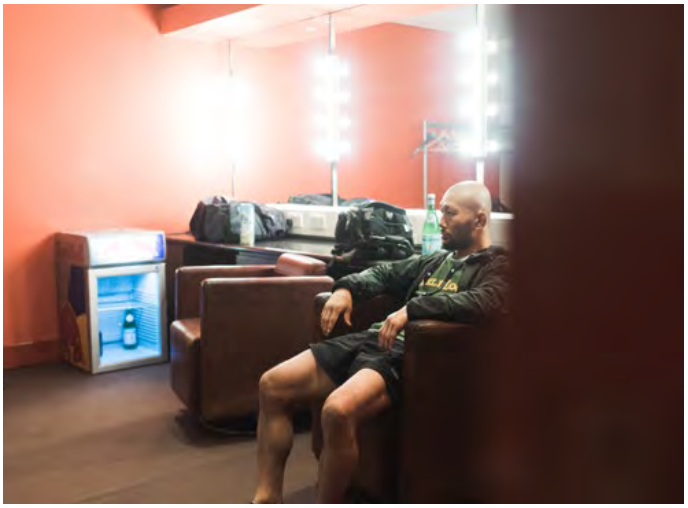
We also have lots of technique for you this time around, including some nice sequences courtesy of Edwin Najmi, one of Gracie Barra's best young talents. Our resident BJJ doctor, Braulio Estima, has also shown some gold this issue; pay attention to the choke from deep half guard!

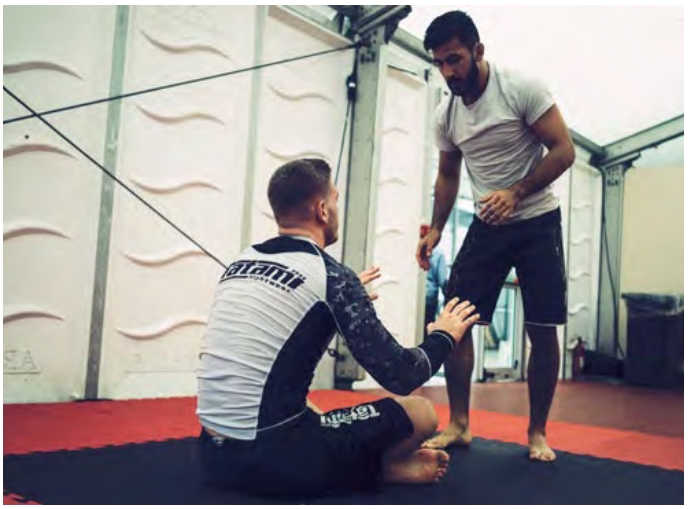
Finally, I'd like to say a huge 'thank you' to all my fans over the years for the support. It's been a privilege to compete and represent my family both on the mats and in the cage, and I couldn't have done it without all the love and support I've had.

Enjoy the latest issue of the magazine guys and – until next time – keep training and enjoying jiu jitsu.

ROGER GRACIE

"ATHLETE 3" EMILIA TUUKKANEN





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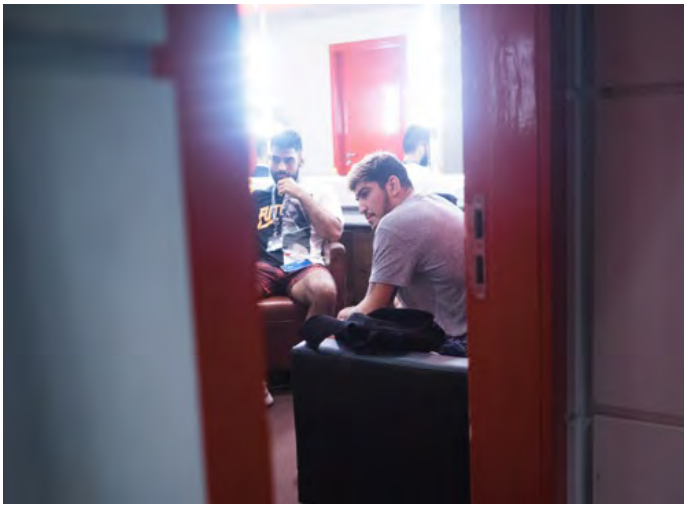


THE BIG PICTURE

A big night for Polaris Pro, selling out the Indigo O2 Arena and making their debut on UFC Fight Pass on August 19th.

PICTURE: LUKE JARVIS

CLASSIC MATCH

THE REFEREE WAVES TADEU OFF AS THE LIGHTS BRIEFLY GO OUT. WHEN THEY FLICK BACK ON, THE CAMERA IS SHOWING A WIDE SHOT OF THE CROWD. YELLOW T-SHIRTS ARE EVERYWHERE, CHAIRS START TO FLY PAST.

MATCH LENGTH: 15 MINS
LOCATION: RIO DE JANEIRO, USA
VENUE: TIJUCA TENNIS CLUB
EVENT: PENTAGON COMBAT

RENZO GRACIE VS EUGENIO TADEU

When it comes to combat sports, Brazil has had more than its fair share of volatile rivalries. Few reached the intensity of jiu jitsu versus luta livre, two different styles of grappling. According to Roberto Pedreira (who is in the process of publishing a history of luta livre), the term first came into common use in 1909. As Pedreira puts it on Global-Training-Report.com:

"Luta livre (literally, free fight) was the word used to describe a form of professional stage wrestling that differed from the earlier form of professional stage wrestling, known in Brazil as luta romana (which was upper-body wrestling, now called Greco-Roman wrestling). Luta romana had become boring and audiences wanted more exciting 'fights'. Luta livre was the answer."

Pedreira recounts how the term was applied in a slightly different way to a hybrid style of fighting in the '50s, used by athletes like Waldemar Santana and indeed Carlson Gracie. When people think of luta livre today, it is the third incarnation in Pedreira's timeline, which developed after the first UFC reinvigorated grappling around the world and particularly in Brazil.

In *With the Back on the Ground*, Luiz Otavio Laydner points to the Brunocilla family and their academy in Rio, based at Boqueirão do Passeio near Santos Dumont airport. On BJJ Heroes, there is a list of flashpoints between jiu jitsu and luta livre in the '80s. After a scrappy altercation at the Naja academy in 1982, a more formal confrontation was arranged by Robson Gracie.

Three representatives training at various Gracie schools would face off against three from the Naja school. That included Eugenio Tadeu, a successful muay thai competitor. For that series of bouts, the team from Naja went to learn from Brunocilla.

Laydner relates that "Brunocilla was none too pleased with what he saw. Except for Ruas […] the rest […] wouldn't stand a chance fighting on the ground." Nevertheless, according to Laydner, Tadeu was able to overcome his opponent due to the Gracie representative wearing a gi: "with one hand he grips his opponent's gi, while with the other he wails on him with punches."

In 1988, Tadeu's groundfighting had clearly improved, given he held Royler Gracie to a draw in a thirty-eight-minute fight behind closed doors. He was involved once again in the 1991 Desafio Jiu Jitsu vs Luta Livre, where he lost to Wallid Ismail (by refusing to return to the ring after both men fell out).

By 1997, BJJ appeared to have come out on top in the long-running rivalry. The '91 Desafio had been a comprehensive success for BJJ. Six years later, Nelson Monteiro set up an event supported by Sheik Tahnoon, best known for the Abu Dhabi Combat Club. Monteiro's event was called Pentagon Combat, where he managed to get Renzo Gracie and Eugenio Tadeu onto the card.

Before the match, Tadeu had commented that the rivalry between the two styles was in the past. Unfortunately this proved to be a not entirely accurate statement. The seeds were sown when around two hundred luta livre supporters in yellow t-shirts managed to get in early to the fight, without paying.

THE MATCH

After exchanging strikes, Renzo soon shoots in for the takedown, advancing to the back: it looks as if the fight could already be over. Yet Tadeu slips free. They rapidly move through mount, side control and the back in a matter of seconds, before rising to their feet. Tadeu has his arm around Renzo's neck. Renzo manages to push forward, Tadeu hunting for the guillotine as he hits the floor.

Renzo rises up and is able to fling Tadeu's legs out of the way to recover side control. Tadeu almost manages to push Renzo off and get back to standing, but his opponent rushes straight back to Tadeu's open guard. The luta livre fighter eventually secures a leg: the camera captures a couple of prominent yellow shirts around the fence.

For the first time in the fight, Renzo is on his back. It doesn't last long, Renzo getting to his knees, then crawling up Tadeu's legs to regain control. Again, Tadeu manages to shrug him off and stands, staring down at Renzo, who remains on his back. Looking fatigued, Renzo is stood up by the referee a minute later.

Renzo secures yet another takedown to open guard, before Tadeu stands once again. Luta livre fans surround the fence, leaning over the top, with several men visibly trying to kick Renzo through the chain links. The camera shifts over to the crowd, some of whom are almost over the top at this point. Action inside the cage has stopped.

The referee waves Tadeu off as the lights briefly go out. When they flick back on, the camera is showing a wide shot of the crowd. Yellow t-shirts are everywhere, chairs start to fly past. All the lights come on, then over a heap of chairs, the credits roll on the broadcast.

"JOSE MORAES, WAS ONE OF THE SPECTATORS. HE WAS THE ONE WHO CALLED THE POLICE. SEVENTY OFFICERS ARRIVED TO QUELL THE RIOT"

AFTERMATH

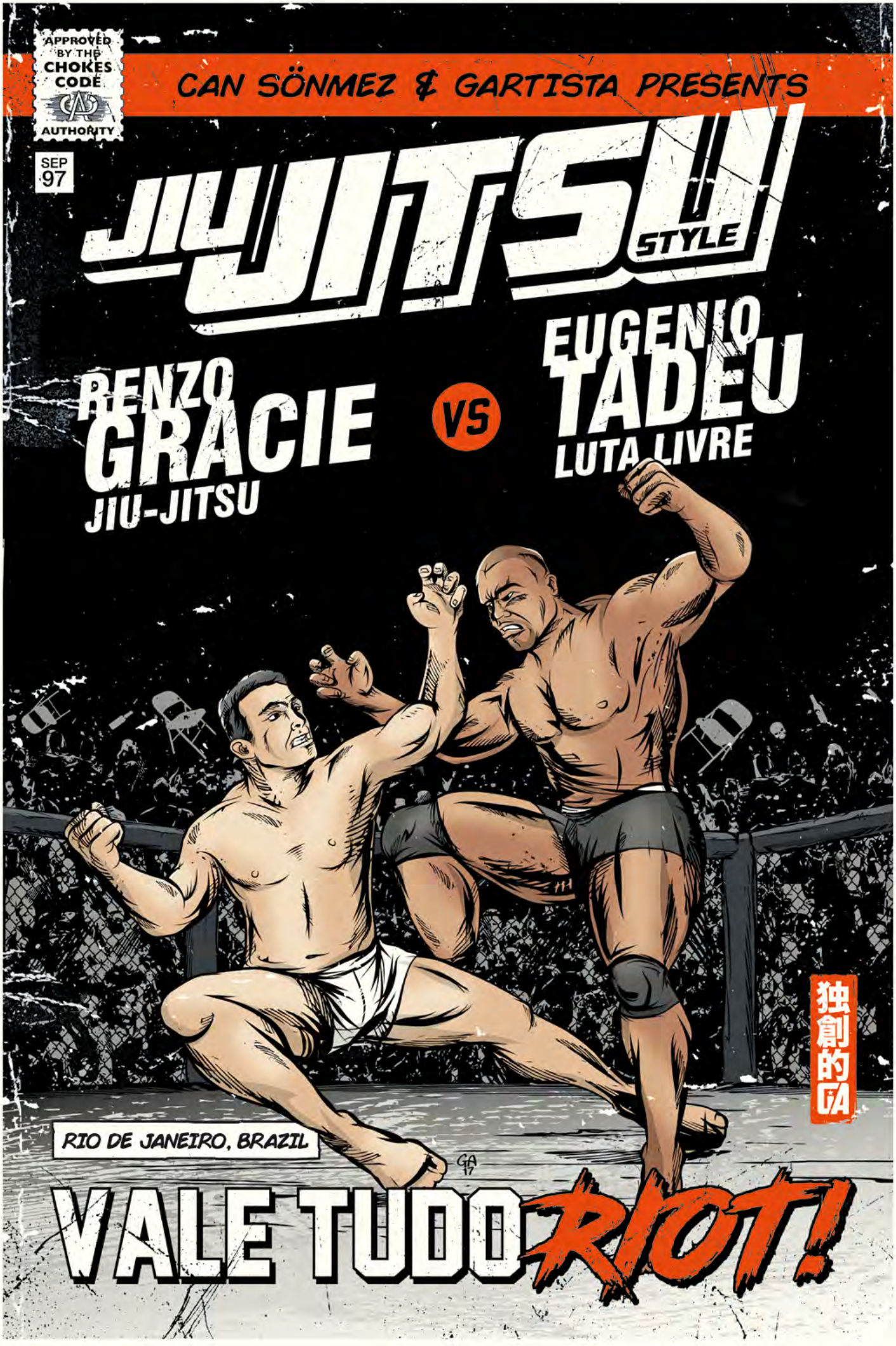
Roberto Pedreira lays out the scene in *Choque*:

"The resulting donnybrook lasted 30 minutes and left the locale a shambles. Every chair in the room was thrown and five shots were fired. The Secretary of Sports in Rio, Jose Moraes, was one of the spectators. He was the one who called the police. Seventy officers arrived to quell the riot."

The authorities were not impressed, especially the international coverage it received. Law 3.005 was passed in July 1998, banning anything dubbed 'vale tudo' in Rio for nearly a decade. Surprisingly, Tadeu is on record as stating this was a positive outcome. In 2013, he told MMAFighting.com that

"That was a historical moment for the sport in Brazil. Every MMA event before that was cloudy, suspicious. It was not about the sport, it was about one martial art. The other martial arts were part of a context. After that night it was over, the events were no longer created for jiu-jitsu to win."

SOURCES: *WITH THE BACK ON THE GROUND • CHOQUE, VOL. 3 • BJJHEROES.COM • GLOBAL-TRAINING-REPORT.COM • MMAFIGHTING.COM • RENZO GRACIE: LEGACY.*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EUGENIO TADEU
LUTA LIVRE
独創的GA
RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL
GA 17
VALE TUDO RIOT!

POSITION STUDY

THE ESTIMA LOCK

THE ESTIMA LOCK IS THE NAME GIVEN TO A SPECIFIC FOOTLOCK DEVELOPED BY TWO WELL-KNOWN BRAZILIAN JIU JITSU COMPETITORS, VICTOR AND BRAULIO ESTIMA, DURING THE LATE 2000S. THIS PARTICULAR SUBMISSION BECAME POPULAR AFTER THE NOGI WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS IN 2011, A COMPETITION VICTOR ESTIMA WON, SUBMITTING ALL HIS OPPONENTS BY WAY OF HIS TRADEMARK HOLD. THE LOCK WORKS BY KEEPING THE TOP OF THE ADVERSARY'S FOOT STUCK TO THE ATTACKER'S ABDOMINAL REGION; THIS COMBINED WITH A FORWARD MOTION OF THE HIP WILL CAUSE INJURY TO THE FOOT, TWISTING IT IN A SIMILAR DIRECTION TO THE TOE HOLD.

HOW THE ESTIMA LOCK WAS CREATED

The Estima lock appeared as a result of the sparring sessions between the Estima brothers in preparation for the 2009 ADCC, which Braulio was participating in. Victor was having trouble with his brother's inverted guard and for that reason he started paying more attention to the feet, looking for ways to attack them. Victor was not known to attack the foot; in fact he told BJJ Heroes that, "Before I didn't really believe in footlocks, it was only after the Rio Open (2009) where I was submitted by Raphael Abi Rihan with one that I started doing them in training."

In one of their rolls, Victor managed to tap Braulio with a footlock by hooking his brother's foot and getting it stuck in his mid-section, then applying pressure from there. This was all done by instinct but it caught both brothers' attention. The two started working on it, adding several details and making it part of their game.

At the 2009 ADCC, Braulio ended up winning the tournament, making use of their newly created position successfully against Rafael Lovato Jr. His success at the prestigious event proved the position worked at the highest level in grappling.

Though the position was used sporadically, it wasn't until the World No Gi Jiu Jitsu Championship of 2011 that it caught the general public's attention, after Victor's astonishing performance where he submitted all his opponents with this same hold on his way to his first world title as a black belt.

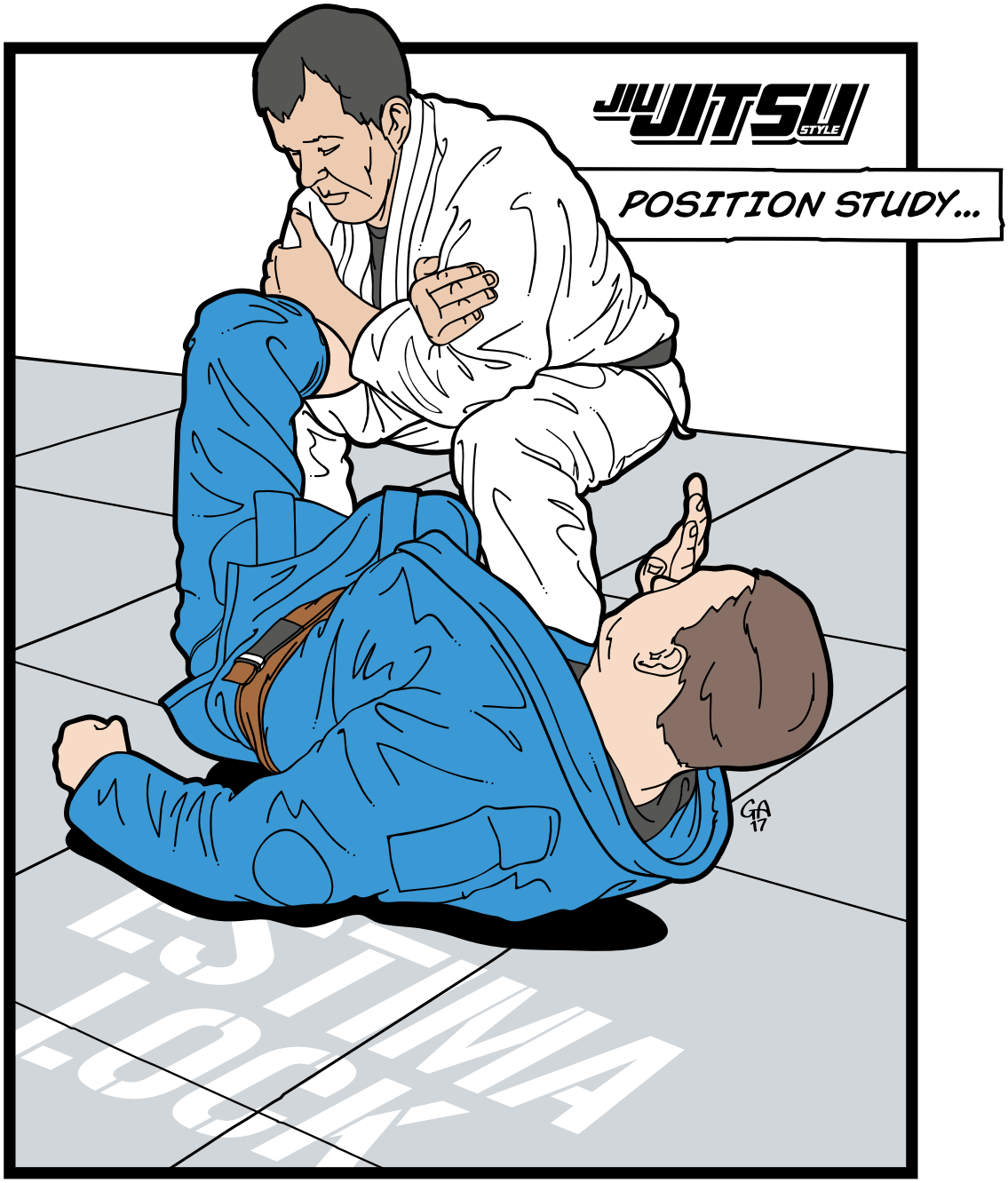

ILLUSTRATION: GARTISTA ☰ WORDS: ANDRE BORGES EDITOR AT WWW.BJJHEROES.COM

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BELT PROMOTIONS

IF YOU WERE LUCKY ENOUGH TO BE AWARDED A NEW BELT RECENTLY, THIS PAGE REPRESENTS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO SAVOUR THE MOMENT WITH RECOGNITION IN JIU JITSU STYLE! SEND IN DETAILS OF YOUR RECENT PROMOTION, INCLUDING THE RANK YOU ACHIEVED AND YOUR INSTRUCTOR'S NAME, AND WE WILL PUBLISH AS MANY AS WE CAN IN OUR MAGAZINE.

SEND YOUR EMAILS TO U2US@BJJSTYLE.COM

Niall Greenfield was promoted to blue belt by Aaron Naisbitt at The Dungeon.

Stuart Forrester and Simon Tutton received their black belts from Helio Soneca at New School BJJ.

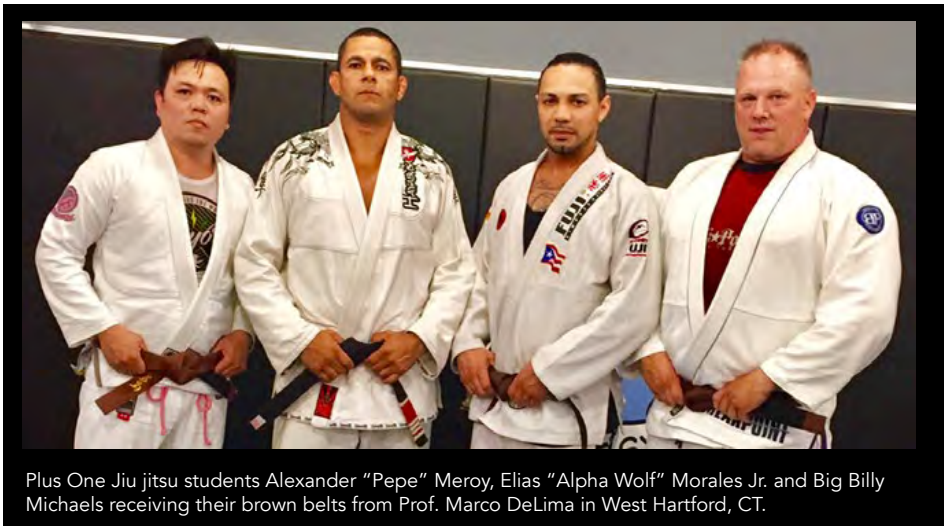
Deshawn Ball was promoted to blue belt at Team Oyama in Irvine , CA under Chito Vera and Coach Joe Murphy.

Patrick Baker was promoted to black belt by 2nd degree Dave Coles at The Combat Academy.

Gareth Davies was promoted to brown belt by Jay Butler and James Hardy.

Jason John was promoted to blue belt by Doug Creed and Dave Broughton.

Keith Goodenough received his brown belt from Helio Soneca at New School BJJ.



Plus One Jiu jitsu students Alexander "Pepe" Meroy, Elias "Alpha Wolf" Morales Jr. and Big Billy Michaels receiving their brown belts from Prof. Marco DeLima in West Hartford, CT.

Eric Johnson from Cia Paulista BJJ Huntington Beach, CA, received his first degree from Master Waldimiro Perez JR.

Paxton Gibbons received his black belt from Roger Gracie at RGA HQ.

Chris Foran received his black belt from Mauricio Gomes and Roger Gracie.

Roggiero J. Spillere was promoted to brown belt by Professor Paul Hartley at Gracie Barra Fulham.

Misha Lund was promoted to blue belt by Lorenzo Fraquelli at Wave BJJ.

THE BLACK BELT POWER-UP

If you keep training, it's an inevitable achievement, but I'd be lying if I said receiving my black belt wasn't a little overwhelming.

I have vivid memories of the first time I rolled with a jiu jitsu black belt: how did they control me so effortlessly? Why can't I do literally anything to mount an attack? What the hell did I just tap to? I came off the mat in complete awe of the skills a high level BJJ fighter has at their disposal, and hell bent on one day reaching that level myself.

Now, close to ten years later – and having received my black belt – I reflect on those early sparring sessions with mixed feelings. Though I'm proud as hell to have achieved a childhood dream of officially becoming a ninja (well, sort of…), I feel an even greater sense of desire to defend my belt and make sure I've reached 'that level'. I remember talking to a fellow jiu jitsu journalist at a tournament a few years back, and something he said has stayed with me: "I don't want to be known as that writer who's s**t at jiu jitsu." That's me in a nutshell.

Jiu jitsu is one of the last remaining bastions of legitimacy within the realm of martial arts. Belts are not given (or bought), they are earned based on a practical competence that in turn goes towards maintaining the fighting proficiency of students. In many martial arts, you can gain a black belt in around the same time it takes for a jiu jitsu fighter to break in a blue belt; transparency is our sport's primary attraction.

Belief in jiu jitsu and respect for the belt system made my final promotion the most daunting of them all. My goals are now focused around defending my grade as best I can and reaching the standards we set – and expect – a black belt to attain in our community. The journey's never finished, the learning never stops, the benefits are endless.

I've always been intrigued by how different academies handle their promotion days and this diversity is another fascinating characteristic of the art. At our club, we keep things pretty simple: everyone turns up, belts are handed out, and we all head out for a drink. Black belt promotions, however, have one slight twist – you're required to give a speech in front of your training partners.

"I REMEMBER A FELLOW JIU JITSU JOURNALIST SAYING TO ME: 'I DON'T WANT TO BE KNOWN AS THAT WRITER WHO'S ST AT JIU JITSU.' THAT'S ME IN A NUTSHELL"**

Public speaking is something I have relatively limited experience in, but I've enjoyed the opportunities when they've come along. That said, when it came to my black belt speech, I quickly found myself out of my comfort zone, and I ended up sobbing through the last few words before sitting down slightly embarrassed; I didn't even cry at my wedding!

Until that moment, standing in front of my training partners, my family away from home, I had no idea just how big a moment this was for me. We all know belts mean nothing on their own, but our journeys both on the mat and off it are interlaced within our jiu jitsu progression. Having the belt tied around my waist brought me back to my first class, reflecting on my development as a person over the years and how jiu jitsu has been my vehicle for self-improvement. In summary, I could never have imagined just how big an effect this immensely fulfilling martial art would have on my life.

The head instructor at our academy, Mauricio Gomes – the Godfather of UK jiu jitsu – recently received his red / white 8th degree, representing 38 years as a black belt. His journey through jiu jitsu is a stark reminder that I've barely scratched the surface of potential within jiu jitsu, and acts as further motivation to keep improving as a grappler and as a human being.

In closing, I have to reserve a special mention for my coach, Roger Gracie, on his epic performance in what was his last outing as a jiu jitsu fighter. Roger is a man I've been lucky enough to spend plenty of time with, watching him train and attempting to delve into how he thinks. His efficiency as a grappler is what often draws headlines but, for me, it's his mental fortitude that's a more impressive asset. It was an absolute pleasure to sit down and talk to Roger for our latest cover feature, and I hope you enjoy what I believe to be a fitting send-off for the greatest jiu jitsu fighter of our generation.

Thanks so much for continuing to support our magazine, and keep enjoying your journey on the mats.

And if I ever meet you in person, remember, I'm a black belt now - ALL BOW DOWN TO YOUR MASTER!!!

CALLUM MEDCRAFT

FAKE FRIENDS

IT'S SCIENCE

BY TYLER BISHOP

DJ JACKSON

HAVING PICKED UP MULTIPLE WORLD ACCOLADES AT THE LOWER BELTS, DJ JACKSON IS A BLACK BELT UNDER LLOYD IRVIN AND ONE OF THE USA'S MOST PROMINENT COMPETITORS. KNOWN FOR HIS WRESTLING BASE AND HEAVY TOP GAME, JACKSON IS RELENTLESS WITH HIS PASSING PRESSURE AND KIMURA ATTACKS. HE WAS RECENTLY CROWNED COPA PODIO MIDDLEWEIGHT GP CHAMPION.

THE AVERAGE LENGTH OF JACKSON'S MATCHES WAS 7:30

BISHOPBJJ.COM
THE SCIENCE OF JIU JITSU

'It's Science' is brought to you by BishopBjj.com. The goal of BishopBjj.com is to expand and empower the jiu jitsu community by emphasising the science and art of jiu jitsu in fun and exciting ways. We want to highlight what makes jiu jitsu so calculated, but also what makes it so much fun.

50%

OF JACKSON'S SUBMISSION WINS WERE VIA KIMURAS

JACKSON SCORED FIRST IN 100% OF THE MATCHES HE WENT ON TO WIN

55%

OF JACKSON'S PASSES ORIGINATED FROM THE STANDING POSITION

44%

OF JACKSON'S PASSES WERE OVER / UNDER VARIATIONS

JACKSON SECURED A GUARD PASS IN 75% OF THE TOTAL MATCHES WE OBSERVED

75%

OF JACKSON'S MATCHES ENDED IN VICTORY

TOTAL MATCHES OBSERVED	12
TOTAL MINUTES OBSERVED	90
MATCHES WON BY SUBMISSION	06
MATCHES WON BY POINTS	03
OPPONENT WON MATCH	03
TOTAL MATCHES WON	09

ABSTRACT:

All matches observed of DJ Jackson used in this small sample occurred at major jiu jitsu events in the years 2012-2017. Only techniques, occurrences, and outcomes that were recorded are displayed in the data below (i.e. if no butterfly sweeps occurred, there will not be a representation of that in the sample data charts). Matches were selected at random. This is a limited sample but - given the estimated amount of matches in this time period – it is well above the percentage necessary to create a scientifically validated trend sampling.

THE BREAKDOWN

DJ Jackson is one of the most active and often underrated grapplers on the scene today. Jackson has built a reputation as one of the most talented nogi grapplers under 200lb but has an equally impressive resume in the gi. He has built success across grappling platforms and proven himself an elite talent, regardless of ruleset.

THE STUDY

DJ Jackson is one of the most accomplished competitors across all grappling organisations and formats. He has shown a propensity to excel in submission-only, point, and alternative rulesets. Much of this is due to his exceptionally strong takedown game and relentless pressure. Jackson has proven himself to be difficult to score against, hard to wear down, and unstoppable when he smells blood.

One of the most unique elements of Jackson's game that we observed in the study was his ability to stay on top. Although we did not breakdown every element of his stand-up game, much of this is due to his ability to defend and secure takedowns on opponents of even the highest wrestling or judo pedigree. Jackson was only on the bottom once in our entire study.

When on the bottom, we observed a single sweep. If opponents were to study this part of Jackson's game they would find themselves short on film, as his bottom/sweep ratio is 100% by our count.

When on top, Jackson is known for his relentless guard passing. In our study, we saw a diverse and dynamic string of passes that saw him secure a guard pass in 75% of total matches. 55% of his guard passes were initiated from a standing position. 44% of all passes were a variation of the over/under guard pass; something we saw Bernardo Faria have a lot of success with in our evaluation of him (although, Jackson uses a slightly different variation).

Unfortunately for his opponents, Jackson is a threatening adversory even before he passes the guard. In this study, 50% of Jackson's submissions occurred before – or in the process of – passing his opponent's guard. However, regardless of position, Jackson's submission of choice was the Kimura; a submission he has built a strong reputation for. In fact, 50% of all his submissions were Kimuras.

Ultimately, Jackson is as underrated as they come. His pedigree and fundamentals are top notch and he has managed to stay at the top of every quality grappling organisation jiu jitsu has to offer. He remains one of the most difficult draws in any division he enters and possesses a rare quality to completely annihilate other top-level competitors that are not prepared for his pace (see his match with Vagner Rocha earlier this year). Jackson's career is worth monitoring as he continues to chase titles and further develop his submission skills.

100% OF JACKSON'S SWEEPS IN THE STUDY ORIGINATED FROM THE HALF GUARD

SWEEPS (POSITION)

HALF GUARD	1

SWEEPS (TYPE)

UNDERHOOK TO HEADLOCK SNAPDOWN	1

PASS (POSITION)

ON KNEES	1
HALF GUARD	3
STANDING	5

PASS (TYPE)

KNEE THROUGH	1
BULL FIGHTER	2
LEG-WEAVE	1
KNEE CUT FROM HALF GUARD	1
OVER / UNDER PASS	4

TAKING THE BACK

FROM PASSING GUARD	1
SIDE CONTROL	1

SUBMISSION (POSITION)

GUARD (TOP)	1
SIDE CONTROL	4
HALF GUARD	1

SUBMISSION (TYPE)

KIMURA / AMERICANA	3
WRIST LOCK	1
HEAD AND ARM CHOKE	1
HEEL HOOK	1

SUMMARY

SUCCESSES: OVER / UNDER PASS AND KIMURA

TOP TECHNIQUES: OVER / UNDER PASS AND KIMURA

AVOIDED: BOTTOM POSITION

HISTORY 101:
COBRA KAI BJJ

In 1996, only three years after Royce had first dominated the Ultimate Fighting Championship, martial artists were flocking to the Gracie Academy in Torrance. On the 22nd January, Marc Laimon would join them. He earned his blue belt quickly, but it was not long until he started to have doubts, which he would become infamous for airing. As he put it in an interview on CagePotato.com:

"*I was training eight or nine hours a day, all day and I was starting to get pretty good. Then I went to the Pan-Ams and I saw guys there doing moves I had never seen before. I saw omoplatas and I saw Shaolin tap Robin Gracie when they were both brown belts and I was like, 'Wow.' Shaolin had only trained something like three and a half years. I went back to the academy and Rorion told me that I wasn't ready for that kind of jiu-jitsu.* [...]

"*Each Gracie is an individual and different. My main problem was with Rorion and how he did things. He'd say things like 'Everybody who left the academy is bad – they're bad apples.' Well, I started to think, 'Maybe the apples aren't bad; maybe you're a bad farmer.'*"

A year after he began learning from Royce and Rorion, a disgruntled Laimon left to train at the Beverly Hills Jiu Jitsu Club. Having received his purple belt from Joe Moreira, Laimon would later spend a stint teaching in Hawaii. His next stop was Las Vegas, where he trained with John Lewis at J-Sect. While there, Laimon fought his way to a gold medal at the 1999 Pan Ams, prompting his promotion to brown belt.

Typical of many BJJ instructors at the time, Lewis had fought in mixed martial arts, battling Carlson Gracie Jr to a draw at Extreme Fighting 1. His gym became a Mecca for fellow MMA fighters. Both Dana White and the Fertitta brothers took private lessons from Lewis. This would prove to be a catalyst for their eventual purchase of the UFC.

In January 2001, the UFC became part of Zuffa, an entity created by the Fertitta brothers specifically for the purpose of running their new acquisition. 'Zuffa' roughly translates as 'to fight' in Italian. Dana White, previously a manager for MMA luminaries such as Chuck Liddell and Tito Ortiz, had a 9% stake. That same year, John Lewis promoted Marc Laimon to black belt.

The J-Sect gym would develop a close connection to mixed martial arts, unsurprising given the importance Las Vegas would develop for the sport. UFC 33 was triumphantly named 'Victory in Vegas', the first Ultimate Fighting Championship to take place in the city. Las Vegas became a hub for the promotion from that year onwards, especially the first five years under Zuffa.

By 2004, Laimon and Lewis had a falling out, meaning Laimon was ready to open his own gym. Initially he had considered Hawaii or California, hotbeds of jiu jitsu. While he was still deciding on a location, Laimon and a few others were training in his backyard. The facilities were less than ideal: as Simpson Go recalled on Open Mat Radio, "there were rocks, mats on top of the rocks."

The strong MMA connection from J-Sect continued at Laimon's new gym. 2004 proved to be an extremely busy year. Laimon was part of *The Ultimate Fighter's* inaugural season, as well as preparing for a match with Ryron Gracie at Grapplers Quest. As he told Stephan Kesting:

"Well I was involved in a reality TV show, running my school and training all at the same time. I'd be up at about 7 am, go to the show, do my conditioning with Couture, then teach my classes, get some training in, be back at the show from about 4 pm to 8 pm, then teach more classes and go home. It was really, really tough, and I'm glad it's over."

Simpson Go, known as Sim, is a Las Vegas native. He had some wrestling experience at high school, providing the slightly built Go with some additional confidence. Back when he and his elder brother were looking to train BJJ, J-Sect was one of two possible options in his city. At the age of 15, Go joined the team at J-Sect.

Go was an avid competitor, despite often coming in at 15lbs underweight. His diminutive frame led to an unusual nickname, 'The Pekinese'. This was a wry nod to the widespread use of pitbulls as symbols and monikers in the sport. Go is also known as 'The Bear Tamer', which he explained tongue-in-cheek to OnTheMat had resulted from a camping trip when he was six. Having the wildlife consume their food meant he "held a personal vendetta against bears in general."

Not long after Go received his blue belt, Marc Laimon left his coaching position at J-Sect to set up his own school. Go decided to follow him. Fortunately for Laimon and his students, they were able to upgrade from mats placed over rocks to a small office space. What would become Cobra Kai had around six to eight people training regularly to start with, eventually expanding to classes of over twenty cramped into the original premises.

Competition was also responsible for the school's name, taken from classic '80s film *The Karate Kid*. The team had entered one of Chris Brennan's tournaments, but remained anonymous. The group went through a list of video game related ideas, before "one of the guys just thought, 'Cobra Kai' from *The Karate Kid*. He thought we were like the bad guys from the movie."

Laimon moved to Texas in 2012 to become part of the coaching staff at Team Takedown, passing the reins of Cobra Kai to Sim Go, who continues the lead the team today.

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TIMELINE

1996
Marc Laimon starts training in Torrance

1997
Laimon moves to the Beverly Hills Jiu Jitsu Club

2001
John Lewis promotes Laimon to black belt

2004
Laimon founds Cobra Kai in Las Vegas

2006
Sim Go is promoted to black belt by Laimon

2012
Sim Go takes over at Cobra Kai

SOURCES: BJJHEROES.COM • GRAPPLEARTS.COM • OPENMATRADIO.COM
CAGEPOTATO.COM • ONTHEMAT.COM • VERBALTAPCAST ON YOUTUBE

PHOTO ESSAY: **LUKE JARVIS**

BATTLE PHOTOGRAPHY

Caol Uno is a legend in mixed martial arts. With over 50 professional fights to his name – and as one of the first Japanese athletes to compete in the UFC – the 42-year-old is a cult hero amongst fight fans. In this photo documentary, Luke Jarvis captures Uno's valiant attempt to defeat jiu jitsu legend, Vitor Ribeiro, at Polaris Pro 5 in London.

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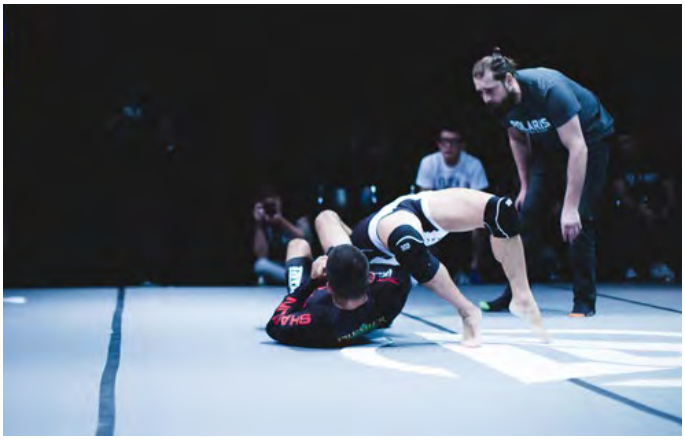
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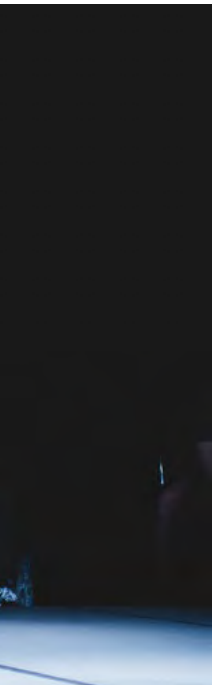

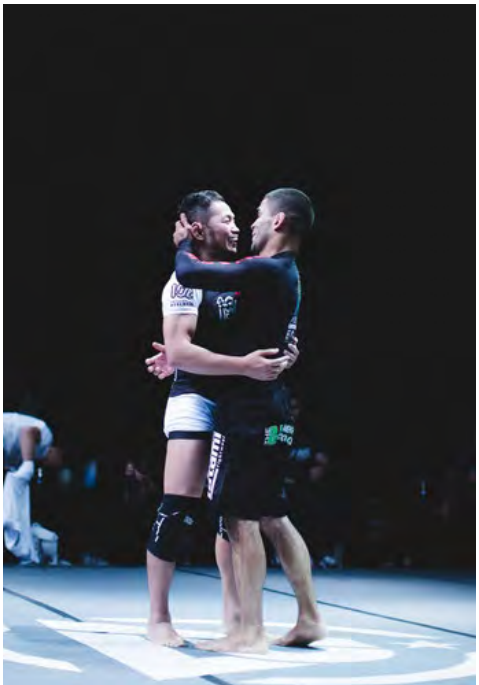

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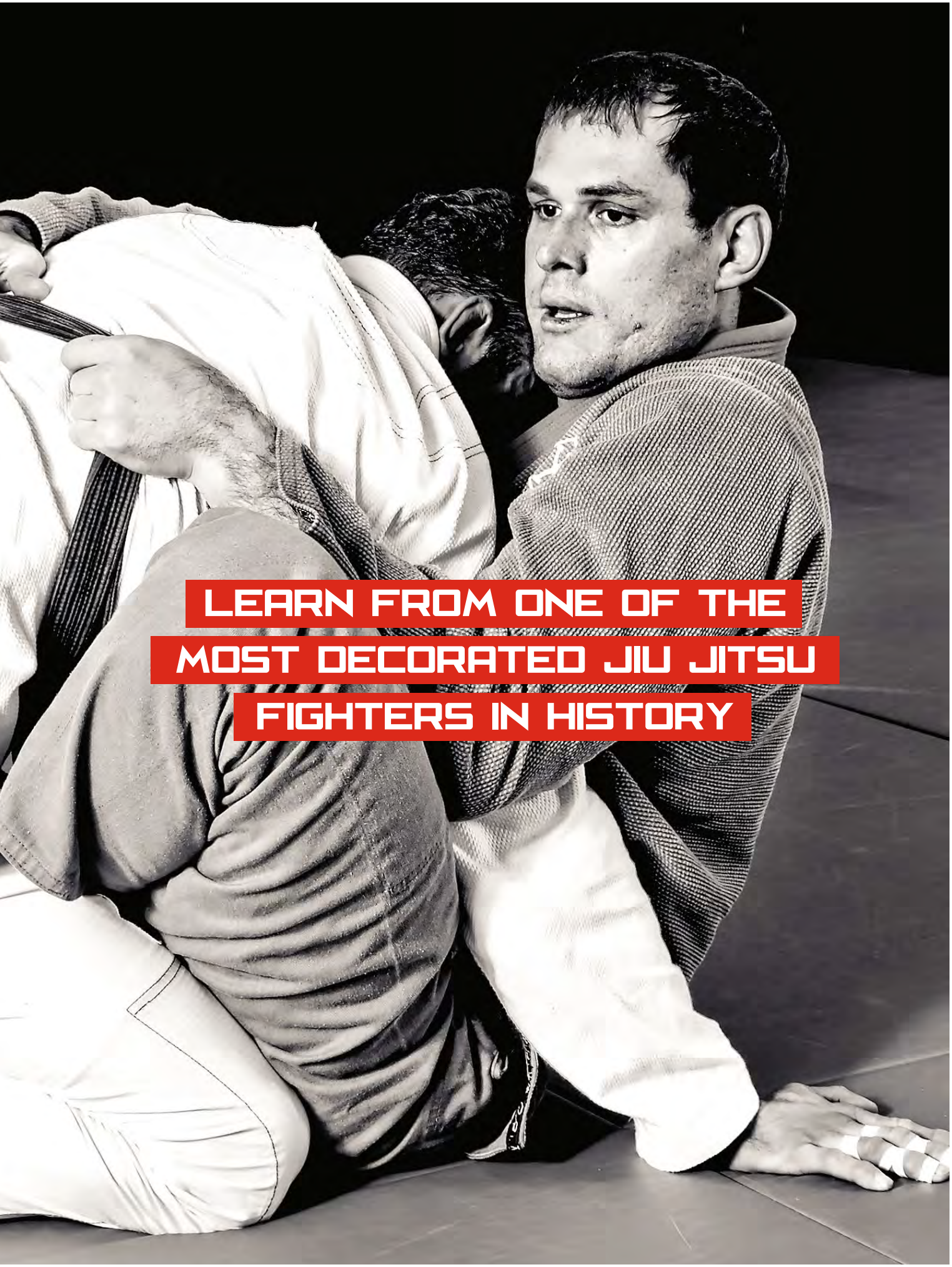
LEARN FROM ONE OF THE
MOST DECORATED JIU JITSU
FIGHTERS IN HISTORY

WORDS: CALLUM MEDCRAFT
PICTURES: NATASHA FORD

FFION DAVIES: TAKING ON THE BEST

Ffion Davies is, without doubt, one of the most talented British jiu jitsu fighters on the scene at the moment.

Having cut her teeth as a Welsh National judoka, Ffion has been on a competitive rampage in recent months.

She pushed black belt world champion Talita Alencar to her absolute limit at EBI 12, picked up a Polaris Pro super fight victory and qualified for the up-coming ADCC – all as a purple belt – so the sky is the limit for this Welsh fighter.

We caught up with Ffion to chat through her transition from judo and MMA to jiu jitsu, her love of the guard and dreaming of world titles.

Hey Ffion, thanks for talking to us! Your initial martial arts experience came in judo, so can you tell us a bit about that?
I started judo when I was nine, so quite a young age. My mum works in mental health and she started to learn some judo to help her in case any of her patients became violent; she's a brown belt in judo, but my brother and me went along as well.

So did you enjoy the judo, or was it more of a chore to go to?
I did a lot of competitions when I was younger and I did really enjoy my judo. As I got a bit older, I started to get distracted when socialising with friends became more of a priority. I did the classic thing and quit, which I really regret, but I think I kind of fell out of love with judo as I grew older.

But you did have a spell on the Welsh National Judo team, correct?
I was, yeah. For a time I really did want to go to the Olympics. I remember watching London 2012 and thinking that getting to the Games was going to be my goal. To be honest, at that age, I just didn't have the work ethic to go along with the ambition. I was like, 'I want to go to the Olympics, but I don't want to train hard'. I wish I could go back in time and shake myself (laughs).

So how did you then end up interested in MMA and jiu jitsu?
I ended up returning to judo when I was about 18. I was only really doing it to keep fit to be honest, as I found going to a regular gym really boring. After a little while I gave the judo up again, but then I heard about Ronda Rousey going over to MMA, so when I saw that I thought, 'cool, that looks awesome; she's good at judo'. I was also interested in striking, myself, and wanted to try that out. Before this, a boxing gym had turned me away – they just said they don't have girls train at their gym. So I started MMA at the Chris Rees academy in Swansea.

"JIU JITSU HAS MADE ME THINK OF MY BODY AS A TOOL FOR KICKING SOMEONE'S ASS AS OPPOSED TO JUST HOW IT LOOKS"

I remember when I first started training, I didn't want to put the gi on at all because I'd done it for so long with judo. I also didn't really make many friends in the judo world, so, I don't know, I think I just had some negative connotations in my head associated with training in the gi. Obviously my coach was adamant I needed to do jiu jitsu to compete in MMA, so I started off doing a lot of nogi, before finally starting to train in the gi. I said I'd never compete in jiu jitsu, but then, after watching some friends compete, I just felt that urge to jump in myself.

Are your goals now MMA focused, or jiu jitsu focused?
It's 100% jiu jitsu now. I had a few MMA fights, but I was trying to train full-time as a jiu jitsu athlete and MMA fighter at the same time. I was doing so many sessions every day that I was just exhausted, and I also found that whenever I was doing a striking session, in my head, I just wanted to have my gi on.

I did a few competitions at blue belt: I won the Europeans and started to do okay, so I was leaning more and more towards just doing jiu jitsu. I realised I wanted to spend more time trying to get better at jiu jitsu. Initially I always had the thought that I'd go back to MMA, but now I don't see that happening.

What do you think it was about jiu jitsu that you preferred to judo so much?

"For a time I really did want to go to the Olympics. I remember watching London 2012 and thinking that getting to the Games was going to be my goal. To be honest, at that age, I just didn't have the work ethic to go along with the ambition"

I can't quite pinpoint it, but an example I use a lot is the different experiences I had at competition. In judo, my experiences were just of girls not talking and just glaring at each other. I get that it's important, but at my first jiu jitsu tournament I was used to people coming up and chatting to me and just being really friendly.

I've had chats with my opponents before and after jiu jitsu tournaments and I just find that really lovely, whereas at the judo events I went to I just found the hostility a bit unnecessary. I mean, I take things seriously and my goal is to be a world champion, but that doesn't mean I can't talk to people and have friends in the sport. I don't mean any disrespect for judo people, because it's like that in a lot of sports, but I love the jiu jitsu vibes; we're like the hippies of the martial arts world.

Did you struggle to shake any judo habits when you started taking jiu jitsu seriously?
I had problems getting my head around starting on your knees; plus, I turtled all the time, so people were taking my back so easily (laughs). I did find it confusing when I first started getting smashed by white belts as well! I guess I didn't realise I was egotistical, but I definitely was. Maybe everyone is though, because I've known a lot of people try jiu jitsu – some with judo backgrounds – who've just turned around and called it stupid when it doesn't work for them.

I got my blue belt fairly quickly because I wanted to compete, and as a judo black belt that was necessary. I remember playing guard a lot at blue belt in the gym. People assumed I could only play top because I'd end up there a lot in competition, but I actually love playing guard. The problem was that people would always want to pull guard first because they knew about my judo background.

I think people tend to over estimate my judo level as well, to be honest; I wasn't that good. I mean, there's not a huge pool of people who do judo in Wales, and I wasn't that high level – I wouldn't do very well at competitions. It can be quite frustrating actually, because judo is obviously a big part of my background, but I love playing guard and am a jiu jitsu fighter.

So you now pursue jiu jitsu full time – has that been a hard transition?
I had a part-time job for a bit, but I finished that in the end and I've been pretty much full-time since I was a blue belt. The training isn't always easy because not everyone can train full-time, so often my daytime sessions are just me and my partner Bryn.

In Wales, and the UK in general I guess, the scene still isn't huge like in the US. I'm basically skint all the time, but I can't complain because I love jiu jitsu. We also started our club about a year ago, which is called CF24, so that's all keeping me busy.

Considering you're known as a competitor, is teaching something you enjoy, Ffion?
I do, yeah. I have a women's class, and it's so nice to have women on the mat. I am used to all the laddish banter, but I actually feel like having more women train changes the vibe and people are more mature (laughs). We all have a laugh still, of course.

We have to talk to you about your performance on EBI; how did you get your invite?
So, I wasn't actually a first choice for the show. They'd picked all the girls, and then there were two who pulled out two weeks before the show. My coach Darragh (O Conaill) then messaged Eddie Bravo to see if they'd want me to fill in. Initially he said they weren't considering purple belts, but then he ended up getting back to me and asking if I wanted to have a go.

Even though you ended up losing, your performance against Talita Alencar, a black belt world champion, was amazing!
Thanks! It was an awesome experience, but also really terrifying. I think it was because I turned up there with the mindset that I didn't really belong. Maybe it was because I was invited last minute, or because

Ffion facing off against Talita Alencar at EBI 12 (picture, Daniel Briseno)

"It can be quite frustrating actually, because judo is obviously a big part of my background, but I love playing guard and am a jiu jitsu fighter"

I was a purple belt at the time – I don't know. I do struggle with the mental side of things actually; I struggle allowing myself to feel confident.

When I was fighting Talita, I was doing ok, and I found myself thinking, 'is this happening?' I passed her guard and then got her back, but then slipped off her back. At that point I realised that none of that really mattered because it was a sub only tournament. I think once I'd missed that opportunity I allowed myself to be a bit awestruck. It was a great experience though, as I was able to pinpoint some holes in my game. I was on her back for a while and couldn't finish her, but she was on my back for a second and finished me straight away. Going into the ADCC I know I can't allow myself to get star-struck by the people I'm fighting.

You mention the ADCC, so how excited are you to compete in Finland?
I'm so excited! All my idols are going to be competing. Someone asked me who I'd love to fight and I said Bia Mesquita - she's my absolute idol. She was added to the card recently, so I'd love to fight her.

Great stuff, we look forward to seeing you fight. You also competed at Polaris Pro 5, so you must be getting used to the super fight spotlight now?
I don't know about that (laughs). I had such great fun at Polaris and the experience was so different from EBI. The professionalism was the same for both, but at Polaris I knew most people who were there. All my friends came to watch and it just felt a lot more relaxing. My opponent was really nice as well, and we were talking before and after our fight.

So how has your ADCC preparation been going?
It's been going really well. I've been doing a lot of wrestling to help prepare for this. It's been important for me, actually, because I used to rely on judo techniques for my takedowns, which often results in me getting my back taken. I've also been working on my leg attacks and getting used to that side of the game. I've upped my strength and conditioning as well with my coach Rhys Jones, so it's been busy. Oh, and a bit of yoga as well just to keep myself from breaking.

You've not long been a brown belt, but do you find that frustrating considering you've shown you can mix it with the very best?
Definitely not, I'm very happy to still be a brown belt (laughs). It's all been quite fast and sometimes I look at my brown belt around my waist and think, 'what the hell?' I've not even done a gi competition at brown belt yet, so I'm looking forward to that. There's no rush for black belt at all.

Do you feel proud to be one of the most successful British jiu jitsu athletes at the moment, let alone one of the most successful female athletes?
The ADCC trials showed we've got some talented women here at the moment. Obviously, Sam (Cook) and me qualified, and Vanessa (English) took silver, so that's three British girls doing well. There's also Leoni (Munslow) and Yas (Wilson) competing at that high level and doing great. There's loads of others obviously who will come to mind and I'll feel bad later for not mentioning, but we do have a really high level over here.

Finally Ffion, what advice would you give to women finding the whole jiu jitsu process a little too daunting to maintain?
I would say that you've got to stick with it and that jiu jitsu has completely changed my life. It sounds cheesy, but it's true. I really feel like jiu jitsu is the most empowering sport that a women could do. Jiu jitsu helps you realise just how powerful your body can be.

A lot of women have issues with their bodies – I know I definitely have. Jiu jitsu has made me think of my body as a tool for kicking someone's ass as opposed to just how it looks. I don't care if I've got giant man-shoulders if they help me be able to armbar someone. To have that sort of confidence in yourself is very powerful and can give you a lot of confidence in other areas of your life.

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WORDS: CALLUM MEDCRAFT

ROGER GRACIE

The Greatest Jiu Jitsu Fighter Of All Time

Greatness is a word readily bandied around. There are many exceptional athletes and many exceptional people. But, having returned to action after a seven-year hiatus to submit Marcus Buchecha Almeida in Rio, no-one can argue that Roger Gracie now stands alone: he is the greatest jiu jitsu athlete we ve ever seen.

IT IS RARE TO SPEAK WITH SUCH CERTAINTY but, in Roger's case, things couldn't be more black and white. He hangs up his competition kimono as a 10x IBJJF World champion and 2x ADCC champion (the only man to submit every single opponent en route to double gold in 2005); he's NEVER been submitted since he was a blue belt; his submission victory list reads like a who's who of the jiu jitsu world – what more could he possibly have achieved? That question was answered in late July at the inaugural Gracie Pro tournament in Gracie's hometown: Rio de Janeiro.

"I had to come back to fight Buchecha because I really wasn't happy at all with our first match," says Gracie on agreeing to a super fight at the Gracie Pro. "For me, I had a feeling of loss from that first match and I just couldn't get over that. If I'd retired with that as my last match, I don't think I would have been able to get over that. Knowing that I could win, that I could beat him, but with people thinking he had won the first fight and was better than me, was enough motivation to come back. There was no chance I could finish like that."

With Buchecha on the rampage in recent years, and having surpassed Gracie's record in becoming a 4x IBJJF Absolute champion, the Checkmat fighter was a huge favourite going into the super fight. In an online poll created by *FloGrappling*, a whopping 90% of professional jiu jitsu athletes backed Buchecha to pick up the win, with many stating Gracie shouldn't return to action, instead leaving with his legacy intact.

"I knew I was the underdog going into that second fight," explains Roger. "It didn't surprise me at all to see a lot of people predict that Buchecha would win. Because, man, people were saying it had been seven years since I fought the Worlds, and that I was getting older, but at the end of the day, they didn't take into consideration how strong I am mentally."

Though people doubted his ability to handle the extra size, speed and intensity that Buchecha would bring to the table, they were all proved wrong. After fending off a tirade of initial takedown attempts, Gracie secured victory via a collar choke from the back. As soon as the fighters hit the mat, the action was over within a minute.

"I am happy that everything went the way it did. I am blessed in a way; it was such a perfect ending for me and I couldn't have asked for anything more," says Gracie on his dominant performance. "It was the first time I'd fought in Rio for 11 years, my hometown, so it was very special for me."

Once the post-match dust had settled, and Roger's achievement was fully digested, it didn't take long for the community to unanimously agree on his status as jiu jitsu's equivalent to Michael Jordan. This final triumph was the perfect ending to an incredible career; an ending that Gracie himself never had in doubt.

"I truly believe I have the ability to beat anyone, so that's why I had to take this fight with Buchecha and, to be honest, I felt like I had to be the winner," he explains. "Even though I was the underdog, seven years without competing, so you can't blame people for thinking I couldn't be away from the game for so long and come back to beat the best.

"In the sporting world, can you tell me any athlete who has left competition for seven years, then come back and beaten the best? I can't think of anyone in any sport so, like I say, I understand I was the underdog, but I truly believed I could come back and win that fight. I could have been proved wrong of course, but that's how I felt."

We like to focus on Roger's wins, but it's perhaps his losses that highlight his biggest weapon: mental fortitude. It's easy to forget that before Roger really started to pick up momentum, he'd lost three consecutive black belt absolute finals, including the famed broken arm incident with Jacare and the last gasp seoi nage win for Xande Ribeiro. Many a fighter would struggle to recover from coming so close to their dreams, but not Gracie.

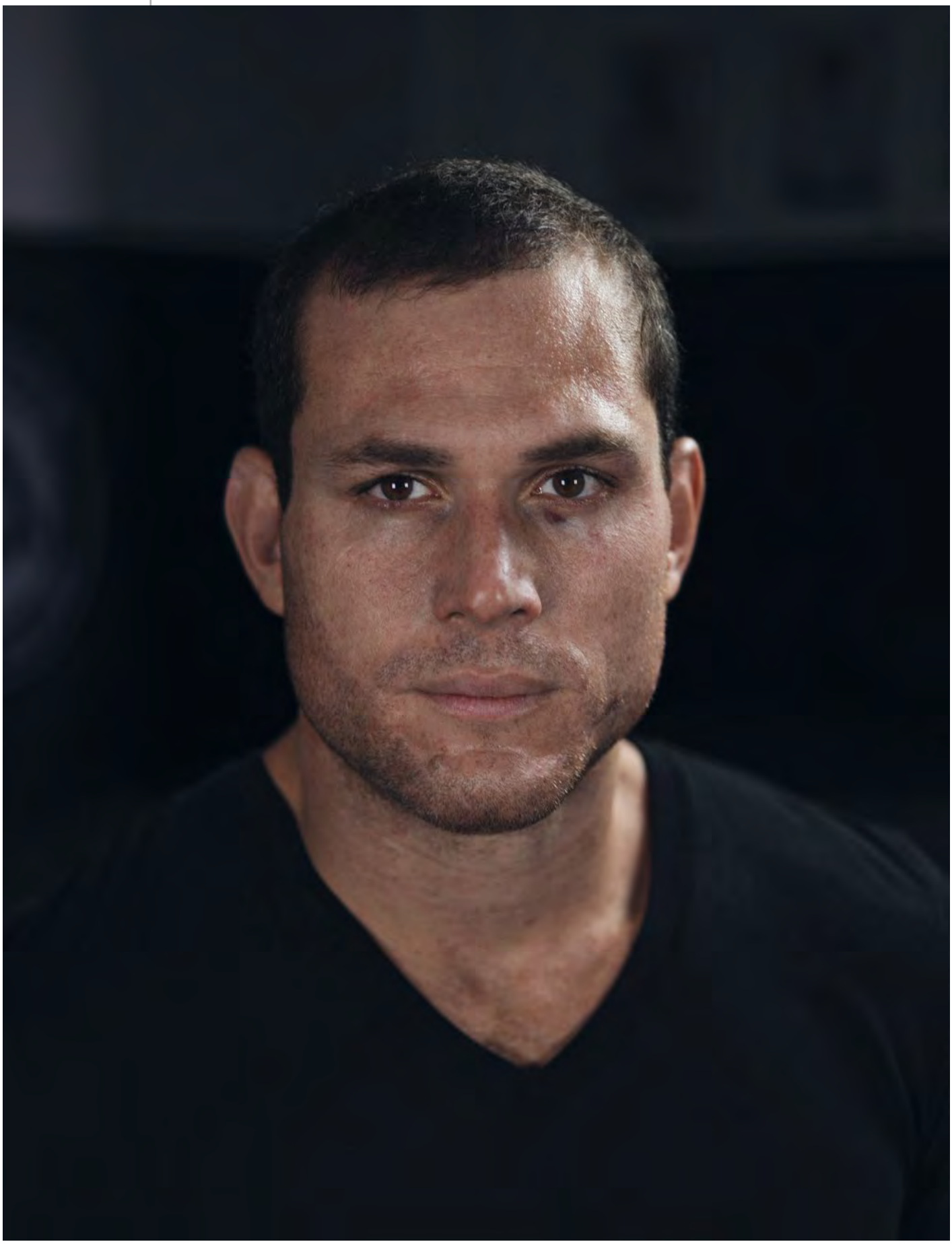
"Man, I have to be honest, I think mental strength just comes naturally," Roger explains. "Look at Muhammad Ali when he fought George Foreman – not even Ali's coach thought he could win that fight. No one believed Ali could stop this guy who was killing everyone, and suddenly he goes and knocks out Foreman, because he believed he could do it.

"I believe my mind is my biggest weapon; my biggest strength. It's what has always pushed me to go further than I thought I could and to stay calm, stay focussed – it's been so important to my success."

Another of Roger's commonly debated strengths is his ability as an escape artist. Having never been submitted since blue belt (where he was caught just once via a foot lock), Roger has crafted the best defensive game we've ever seen. Though you're more likely to be stuck by lightening than witness him tap at competition, Gracie is quick to stress that he taps in training. In fact, he taps all the time.

"MY CAREER HAS BEEN SO FULFILLING, AND IF PEOPLE CALL ME THE GREATEST, THAT IS THE BEST THING THAT I COULD EVER HOPE FOR"

PORTRAITS TAKEN BY ADNY DOUGLAS AT ROGER GRACIE ACADEMY, LONDON



"In training, you have to put yourself in bad positions and be prepared to tap," Gracie explains. "I am used to that; I am there every day. By exposing myself to bad positions regularly, it means that I have become very calm when it comes to working my way out of them. I feel like, during a fight, my head is just as clear when I'm in a good position or a bad position. I think it's all about the ego and that's why people are not used to being in bad positions, because they don't put themselves there in training.

"It's not to say I haven't come close to tapping at competitions (laughs). Fighting Xande at the ADCC in 2005, I came close to going out in his triangle. The armlock with Buchecha at Metamoris was very close as well, but I managed to escape. I don't know what to say really, other than I just never want to give up and manage to stay calm in those situations. Like I say, I've been there before in training a million times, so it's nothing new when it comes to the fight. You have to practise your escapes often, because you often only have a split second to apply the correct defence."

"BECAUSE OF THE WAY I FIGHT, I HAVE NOT HAD TO CHANGE MY STYLE AT ALL. I FIGHT THE SAME WAY NOW AS I DID WHEN I WAS 20"

In an era of berimbolos and rubber guard, Roger's 'simple' or 'basic' game is rarely on the tip of blue belts' tongues. Who wants to spend hours refining their pressure passing, or closed guard, when you can simply go for a heel hook or invert into 'kiss of the dragon'? Though its open platform for creativity is one of jiu jitsu's most appealing features, Roger represents the ideology of efficiency: do the basics, and do them well.

"Because of the way I fight, I've not had to change my style at all – I fight the same way now as I did when I was 20," says Roger. "Most of the techniques I succeed with don't rely on my strength or physique, so that's why my game hasn't had to change and I have been able to concentrate on refining it. The structure of my game is always the same, so whenever I come back to hard training, there's no surprises and I can just focus on getting sharp.

"Lots of fighters focus on changing their game and evolving posi-

tions, which is fine, but I think this can mean you're not always on the top of your game, as you can be in a sort of transition period, you know? It's hard, because jiu jitsu changes all the time and it's fun to go with it, but I do believe my success has been helped a lot by trusting my game and refining what I have. I haven't ever changed my style through my career.

"People think my fighting style is easy or simple. In one way it is, but it's very hard in another way. One of the strongest things in my game is my guard passing that leads to the mount, but that is based on a lot of pressure. What people don't always realise is that developing that pressure style is something that takes years and years of development – it doesn't come quickly. It took me years of practice, slowly getting better, before I got a good collar choke. People need to remember that instead of trying one technique, having no immediate success before giving up and moving on to something else."

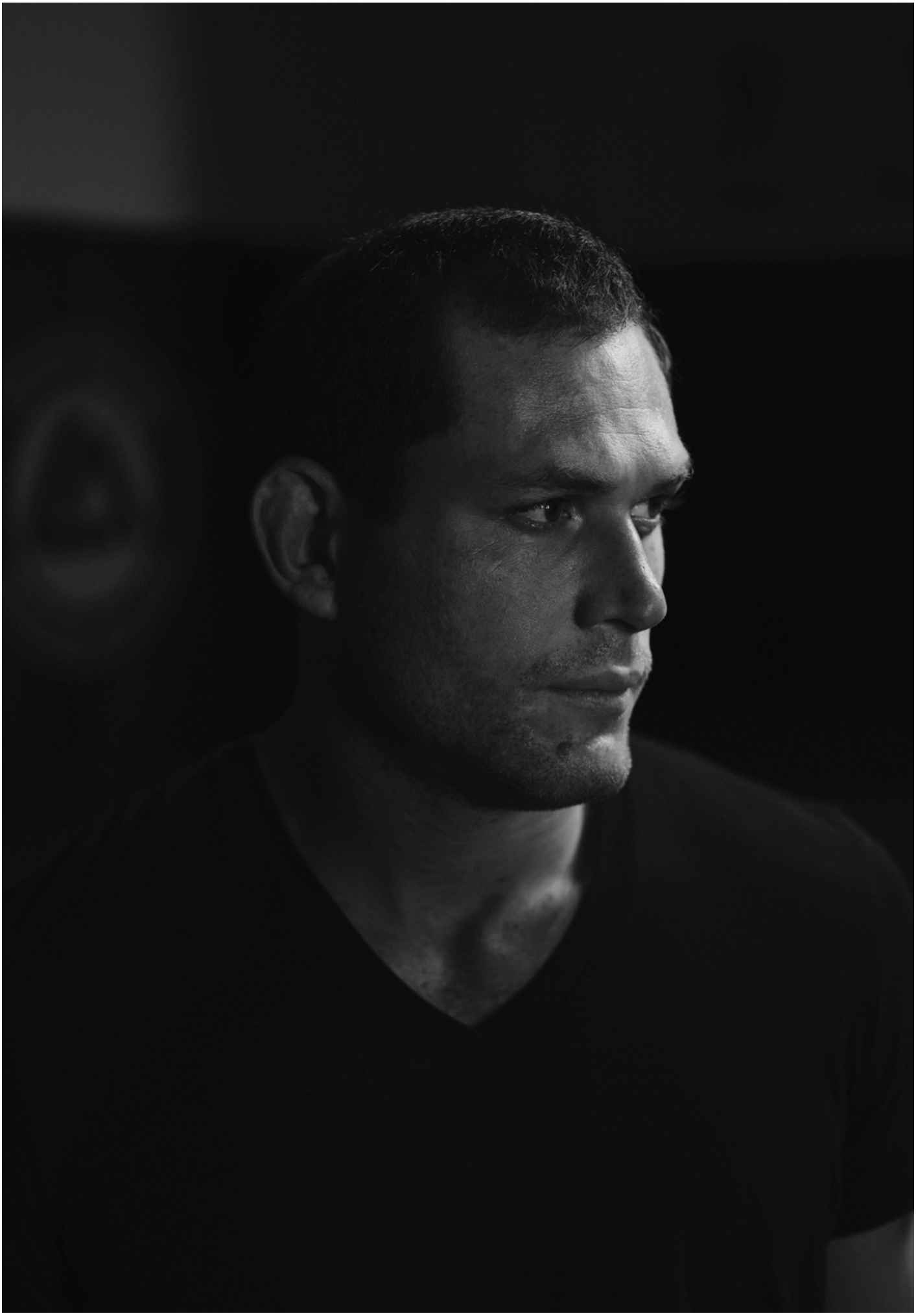
Though most of his career was spent pursuing accolades in the kimono, Roger still made sure to write history in the nogi world. As mentioned previously, his double gold at the 2005 ADCC was the only time an athlete has submitted every opponent they faced. For Roger, who defeated Jacare by rear naked choke in the Absolute final, this was sweet retribution for his loss earlier in the year at the Mundials.

"It's strange actually, because I prefer to fight in the gi, but the 2005 ADCC really stands out for me in my mind – I'd say that was the best moment to be honest," Gracie reflects. "I fought a lot of tough guys, was coming off the back of a disappointment at the Worlds, and submitting everyone was really special.

"It's funny, really, because people don't really think of me much as a nogi fighter, which is probably because I didn't fight nogi much and never enjoyed it like I did fighting in the gi, but I think I proved I wasn't bad in nogi, too.

"And, following on from that, I would also say that I still believe you need to train in the gi to become really good at nogi. Training in the gi just gives you a much

"I TRULY BELIEVE I HAVE THE ABILITY TO BEAT ANYONE, SO THAT IS WHY I HAD TO TAKE THIS FIGHT WITH BUCHECHA AND, TO BE HONEST, I FELT LIKE I HAD TO BE THE WINNER"



"I AM HAPPY THAT EVERYTHING WENT THE WAY IT DID. I AM BLESSED IN A WAY; IT WAS SUCH A PERFECT ENDING FOR ME AND I COULDN T HAVE ASKED FOR ANYTHING MORE"

better technical understanding of the game that you can't get without that training. In nogi you can see a purple belt beat up a black belt, but the gi relies on more technique; it eliminates the slippery aspect and the power."

Retirement marks the end of a glorious jiu jitsu career, but also sees Gracie relinquish his ONE FC Middleweight title belt. He leaves MMA behind with a record of 8-2, having fought in Strikeforce, ONE FC and the UFC – facing some notably tough opponents along the way. Though his MMA achievements can't be overlooked, you can't help but feel that he never quite reached his full potential inside the cage.

"I have no regrets to be honest, because MMA has never been a passion for me," says Roger in reflection. "If I started doing MMA sooner, I would no doubt have achieved some more, but then I would have missed out on becoming the Roger Gracie I am in jiu jitsu. I also think you have to have that passion to be really successful, so MMA wasn't ever going to be the right path for me. I am very glad I didn't go down that path earlier to be honest, but also glad I tested myself there, too.

"I can't say I have any regrets, actually. Even the mistakes I made, all the hard times I had, they all helped make me who I am today. The fights with Jacare, the fights with Xande; I wasn't happy when I lost to them, but these experiences influenced my attitude and shaped my path. I don't know if I would have achieved what I went on to achieve without those experiences."

Having chosen to retire, despite pressure from his cousin, Renzo, who's been quoted as saying, "I'll be pestering him to fight; no one should retire when they're still on top of their game," it's sad to think we've witnessed Roger's final farewell. His matches have always been littered with action; constantly attacking and pushing the fight forward, he's brought excitement to proceedings wherever he's gone.

It's sad to see him go but - like all good artists - Gracie retires leaving his fans wanting more, content in the knowledge he's signed-off on the highest note he could possibly hope for.

"I feel completely content," says Roger on choosing to retire. "I was talking with my students about this, and I'm 100% sure I won't fight again. For me, it's the challenge that has always made me shine, you know? The harder the challenge, the harder I will push myself both physically and mentally, but it's not easy to push yourself to the max like this without the right motivation.

"For me, motivation for a goal has always been what pushed me in my training. Now I feel like my career is complete, so the idea of training to fight the Worlds again, or going to fight Masters, I just know I won't push myself hard enough anymore.

"My will to succeed is what has always pushed me. Many times, I've been in trouble during a fight: caught in an armlock, caught in a triangle or whatever. I've been dead tired, I've been losing, but I've always found a way to push forward to win. That drive to push the extra mile, to go further than you think you can in order to succeed - I don't have that anymore. I don't feel like there's any point fighting if I don't have that will anymore, because I won't be the Roger Gracie that I was, you know? A lot of people love to fight simply because they love to fight, which is great for them, but I just hate to lose. More than a will to win, I just hate to lose, so I don't think I can ever fight just for fun."

With fighting now behind him, what does the future hold for Roger Gracie? His network of schools across Europe and vibrant London academy are evidence that he's no one-trick pony, and teaching is something he's also passionate about. Life on the mats is sure to continue, but Gracie is still pondering his next challenge.

"I'm still trying to figure out what the future holds for me, but one thing is for sure, I'm done fighting," he says. "I want to open more schools, I want to teach more, start some new projects and stuff like that. I haven't really got a game plan for the rest of my life, but let's see what happens. I am looking forward to teaching and supporting my students who want to compete and push themselves. To help them achieve their goals is something I'm now very excited about."

Whatever he now chooses to do, Roger will be remembered as an enigma in our sport; a fighter who – no matter how hard we try – can never really be explained. His style is both simple, yet beautifully unique, with athletes and fans always acknowledging him as one of the shining stars in the history of our sport. All good things must come to an end, but Roger's legacy will live on.

"I just want to be remembered how I am now," says Gracie in closing. "You know, it's hard to call yourself the greatest, because you can't compare athletes across different generations; I can't be compared to Rolls, or Rickson, or Carlson. All I ever wanted was to be the best fighter of my generation, and I feel like I've done all I could have done to claim that title.

"My career has been so fulfilling, and if people call me the greatest, that's the best thing that I could ever hope for in my career. To achieve the highest place you could achieve in our sport is perfection. I set a goal when I was young to be the best, so to finish my career beating Buchecha is the perfect ending – it couldn't have gone any better. It's impossible to describe how I feel to be honest, I'm just so happy with everything."

storm
RESPONSIVE STRUCTURE
JIU-JITSU TEAM

WORDS: CALLUM MEDCRAFT
PICTURES: GREGORY BELL

LIVE LIFE 2 THE MAX

WITH CYBORG ABREU

OUR COMMUNITY IS FULL OF POSITIVE AND inspiring people; after all, it takes character to even step foot on the mat. But, having recently spent time with Roberto 'Cyborg' Abreu, I think we've found *the* most positive and inspiring person ever to grace *Jiu Jitsu Style* pages.

Cyborg is a glass half-full kind of a guy. Despite suffering a serious car crash in 2000, which saw his left arm shattered, receiving over 300 stitches and doctors saying he will never recover full movement, he returned to win the Brazilian Nationals just four months later.

"I BELIEVE THE MOST VALUABLE THING JIU JITSU CAN GIVE YOU IS THE CORE VALUE OF RESPECT, AND THAT'S SOMETHING YOU CAN REALLY SEE WHEN YOU GO AND WATCH SOME OF THE OLDER GENERATION"

"Before the accident, I'd never won a major tournament, and the doctor told me I'd never move my arm again properly when I recovered," says Cyborg in reflection. "I was told I wouldn't be able to compete at a high level, but I started training, believing, pushing myself and that was the first time I overcame the odds and thought, 'you can achieve what you want.' Belief is so important; things are only impossible until you go and do them."

Just 10 minutes into our interview - having barely sipped my coffee - Cyborg's infectious energy had already had an impact. He held a gaze like a man fully engaged in conversation; responding to every question with wholehearted answers that left me pumped up and ready to take on the world.

"I do believe our worst enemy is the person we see in the mirror," says Cyborg on facing life's challenges. "Your hardest opponent is always yourself. Every day your mind will try to tell you that you can't do something. I'm not going to lie to you man, my body is broken, but I won't let it beat me.

"Man, after I won the ADCC title I probably cried for, like, three days, because I felt like I'd conquered the impossible. I failed many times before getting to that title, and during that time my life was all over the place, but I believed I could do it. So again, that's the message that I believe jiu jitsu gives you every single day. You're going to go to the gym, you're going to go through tough times, but you still keep coming back and doing your thing.

"If you push yourself to be better every single day of your life, you've done it. If you can push through your hardships, overcome challenges in your everyday life, you're a f***ing champion."

Nogi and European titles aside, it was an underdog triumph at the 2013 ADCC that will go down as Cyborg's biggest competitive success – and rightly so. The Fight Sports founder was crowned the Absolute World champion in Beijing after defeating Marcus "Buchecha" Almeida in the final, a match that – if we're being honest – he seemed unlikely to win. Cyborg hadn't read the script, and dreams do come true.

"The ADCC win, for sure that win was my dream come true," he says. "The feeling at the ADCC is completely different from anything else. For example, at the Worlds, I feel like I'm more of a coach than an athlete, because I always have so many students competing. They're two different vibes; ADCC is just the prime of the prime – only the black belts and everyone around you is an inspiration.

"We all stay in the same hotel, we get to hang out together and share some good vibes before we compete. Man, I've been a black belt now for 13 years, so I've been competing against these guys for many years and have built a great friendship. After that we get to compete, and I just don't think there's a better feeling than competing at an ADCC event."

As our conversation progresses, sat outside in the rare London sunshine, it becomes clear that Cyborg's happiness is derived from the simple pleasures life has to offer. He, like everyone reading this, has found jiu jitsu as a driving force in life, and is always thankful for the beautifully varied experiences it has brought him.

"You know, since I started, jiu jitsu has been something that I'm extremely passionate about,"

JIU JITSUSTYLE

says Cyborg. "Having the opportunity to conquer the world in a certain way, travelling around doing what I love is just amazing. Jiu jitsu has given me the power to try and inspire people from all over the world. I've made real friends all over the world, everywhere I go, and that's priceless, you know what I mean?

"This trip as an example: I started in Switzerland, then moved on to Poland, Ukraine, London, Egypt then end up in South Africa – so how amazing is that? All thanks to jiu jitsu. How incredible it is to be able to share such great moments with people of different cultures, different beliefs and different realities. We all experience life in our own unique ways, but through jiu jitsu, we are all united and the same. Age, nationality, religion; none of it matters when we are on the mat, so that is the most amazing thing I find about my travelling. I have jiu jitsu to thank for that.

"Right now, jiu jitsu has taken me to 42 different countries, so how cool is that? I can also say that every trip I have been on has been an amazing experience and people have made me feel like I was at home. I never arrive to a place as a tourist, because I get shown the normal - but beautiful – parts of people's culture. I love nature, so I always ask people to take me to the most beautiful place they can imagine by their home. I find this really important, because if we only share the mats together, it's not a full experience. You see a lot in jiu jitsu people turn up, teach, then leave; I like to share and get to know the people I spend time with. For example, when I go to Egypt we ride horses by the Pyramids – not even Indiana Jones did this s**t (laughs)."

*"IF YOU PUSH YOURSELF TO BE BETTER EVERY SINGLE DAY OF YOUR LIFE, YOU'VE DONE IT. IF YOU CAN PUSH THROUGH YOUR HARDSHIPS, OVERCOME CHALLENGES IN YOUR EVERYDAY LIFE, YOU'RE A F***ING CHAMPION"*

Modern society teaches us to value what we have, as opposed to what we are; work long hours to buy stuff we don't need and look over the fence at the always-greener grass. Though an elite jiu jitsu athlete's bank balance will never reflect that of Tiger Woods or Kobe Bryant, Cyborg knows he's living a life rich with unique opportunities.

"I truly feel like my experiences are priceless," he says. "I don't care how much money you can make, no other sport can give you the experiences that jiu jitsu has given me through all these years. I'm extremely passionate about life in general, so I try to deliver that message wherever I go. It's about my passion for jiu jitsu and the idea that we must live every second of our life as best as we can."

As an athlete, you could argue Cyborg is reaching his twilight years, but he's showing no sign of slowing down. For him, competition is a passion he doesn't see dwindling anytime soon:

"There's that quote that says, 'do what you love and you'll never work a day in your life.' For me, competing is something I love, so I don't want to stop. People asked me after I won the ADCC in 2013 if I was going to stop. I was like, 'what the f**k?' Until that question came up, I'd never even thought about the idea of retiring, and it was something I struggled to understand. I can't imagine not pushing myself and striving to be the best possible version of myself that I could be. I just don't think I even know how to slow down (laughs).

"I always had a tough mentality. I am always up for a challenge; any time, no matter if I've had enough sleep or haven't eaten – whatever. But, I'm learning the hard way that once you reach a certain age, you have to start respecting your body more. You have to start thinking more about the quality rather than the quantity of your training - you know what I mean?

"Taking care of yourself, making sure you have enough rest, eating better; these are all things that become super important as you get older, that's for sure. And maybe even more important than this, is to be smart, so I choose when I really need to push myself during training and during a fight. I really hope that my health just stays the same and I can be like a 50 year-old guy still competing against the kids at the tournaments. I'm always excited to compete, and I can't wait to be in Finland for the ADCC soon."

Cyborg has cultivated a reputation for his beautiful application of jiu jitsu. Though generally fighting over 100kg, he's developed a style that's based on movement and variety; he's just as likely to pull guard and invert, as he is grip-up and drop you on your head. For a man who grew up a 22-hour busy journey away from his instructor, way before the YouTube era, Cyborg became an exceptionally gifted innovator. The tornado guard, in particular, is a position for which he's widely credited, and this willingness to create is something he feels is deeply important.

"I believe there's no right and wrong in jiu jitsu, there's just what works for you and what doesn't," says Cyborg. "It's funny because back in the days when I was working on the tornado guard - when I was a blue belt and no one inverted – people would say, 'what are you doing? You're a big guy and you should be smashing people on top'. I always believed in what I was doing and made it happen, so I love promoting the idea that jiu jitsu allows you to believe in your own creativity. You can make it your own.

"I compare jiu jitsu to a puzzle. A puzzle is made of many pieces, and you will pick up pieces to complete your picture as you develop in jiu jitsu. You will get some pieces from your instructor of course, but you will also get some pieces by being creative, and some from other people. I say this all the time actually, but your instructor is never going to give you everything you need to finish a puzzle. They give you the base from which you can finish your puzzle.

"Nobody is the same, so why should we act like horses with blinkers? Embrace the fact that jiu jitsu is beautifully different for everybody and have a full vision for what you could accomplish. Open your mind and try new things – that's how you'll achieve your goals."

In many ways, Cyborg has crafted a fighting style we should all aspire to mimic. His versatility, willingness to diversify and – most importantly – desire to stay true to the belief that jiu jitsu is a fighting art is something we could all do well to remember.

"For me, jiu jitsu has always needed to be fun and beautiful; I like to train with a smile on my face," Cyborg explains. "I think that's the same when I fight, as I like to open up my game and try and show beautiful jiu jitsu. The way I see things today, there are some who only focus on creating a game that will enable them to win at all costs, but I don't think that's what jiu jitsu is all about.

"The direction things have been going today has led to a big part of jiu jitsu becoming really ugly. For instance, go and watch the Worlds Masters – it's way more interesting and beautiful that the actual Worlds where these guys are f***ing sitting on their ass and pulling 50/50. I have nothing against the technique, but as soon as you go for it, you try to progress and if it doesn't work you move on to something else. I also think we can't forget the importance of knowing how to fight from your feet. Takedowns are a great tool within jiu jitsu that we cannot neglect. Maybe think of me and my guard, but I've always loved takedowns and I actually went to wrestle with the Brazilian national team back in the day.

"I AM EXTREMELY GRATEFUL FOR EVERYTHING THAT I HAVE; WE ONLY GET WHAT WE ARE SUPPOSED TO GET, AND YOU CAN'T HAVE EVERYTHING. I AM BLESSED TO HAVE RECEIVED THE THINGS JIU JITSU HAS GIVEN ME SO FAR"

"At the end of the day, we practise a grappling sport, so we owe it to ourselves to train in other arts and develop our skills to help dominate in every aspect of a fight. We know jiu jitsu comes to life on the ground, but if you can't take people down, you don't have anything. Don't get me wrong, the guard is a gift of jiu jitsu, it's art, but don't limit yourself by learning how to stall with lapels or whatever. I prefer to focus on the more dynamic way that people used to fight back in the day; that Carlson Gracie style of takedown, pass, smash and submit."

The landscape of jiu jitsu is constantly changing, which is to be expected of a sport still in its infancy and growing rapidly. Having been slugging it out as a black belt for over 10 years, giving everything on the mat and then some, Cyborg never fails to walk away with his head held high; feeling nothing but respect for his opponents. Sadly, this can't be said of every competitor. The growth of social media, and the implications it carries, means we have seen a new age of digital protagonists, with many choosing to do their talking via the safety of a keyboard instead of on the mat.

"Today there are too many people who have bad attitudes and are more focused on showing off instead of being a good person," says Cyborg. "There seems to be a sense of entitlement; they have one good result and think that they should be the name on everyone's lips forever after that.

"I believe the most valuable thing jiu jitsu can give you is the core value of respect, and that's something you can really see when you go and watch some of the older generation – they just carry themselves better I think. I believe in the power of social media, but I believe also in trying to inspire people to be better. Anyone who has a big platform online also has a role of responsibility towards their followers."

Wise words from a wise man. Reflecting on this interview, the overriding message felt was that we could all benefit from stepping back occasionally to take stock. By embracing jiu jitsu, we've been given the most amazing gift, and that's something most people will never really understand. We should be passionate about life, thankful for what we have, but never stop chasing our dreams.

"Man, I'm the sort of person who likes to concentrate on all the things I have instead of on the things I don't have," says Cyborg in closing. "I am extremely grateful for everything that I have; we only get what we are supposed to get, and you can't have everything. I am blessed to have received the things jiu jitsu has given me so far, and I work hard to be better every day and keep chasing dreams – if you conquer everything then what do you live for?"

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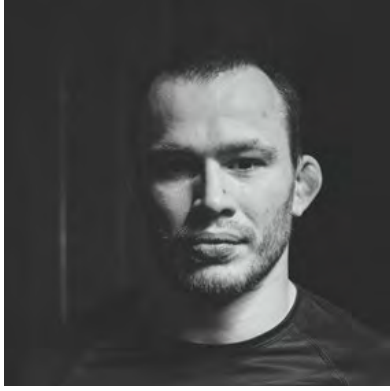
WORDS: OLIVER GEDDES

DAVID AND GOLIATH: PART 2

In my last column, I looked at some of the realities of life as a heavier jiu jitsu player and how it is possible to adjust...



Oli Geddes is a seasoned competitor, referee, globetrotter, half guard connoisseur and black belt under Roger Gracie

...one's game to compensate for the weaknesses and accentuate the strengths. In this edition, I aim to look at the same things from the perspective of a lighter athlete.

The most important concept in playing the top game for a smaller athlete is that it is essential to prevent the bottom athlete successfully applying their full strength against you. This leads to you getting rolled, flipped, or pushed over the majority of the time. As such, there are two primary tools at your disposal and the most important of these is your knee drive.

As long as your knee is projected into your opponent's body (traditionally their hips, but technically can be a number of different positions and directions), you have a way of applying the majority of your weight to your opponent to control and prevent them from turning or sitting up, whilst also remaining mobile and not over-committing your balance in a way they can take advantage of.

It also makes it very hard for your opponent to close their guard, which would in turn lead to them dragging you down into their world, where you have to carry their weight and are significantly more at risk than you are when you are maintaining a more comfortable distance.

The second tool is shoulder pressure. When you are a smaller athlete applying shoulder pressure, it is essential that you are doing so in such a way that you are focusing as much of your weight on one point as possible and that you are actually controlling your opponent and impairing their ability to move. If you are trying to put your shoulder into someone in half guard, and they keep their chin tucked in, then they still have good structural alignment in their body and if they choose to bridge, or explode, they are likely to reverse you.

If you can get under their jaw and either turn their head, or open up their neck so they're looking to one side, away from you or up at the ceiling, then you are actually using your pressure properly and it opens up passing opportunities, rather than committing your weight in such a way that you are just likely to get swept. In short, whether you are using your knee or your shoulder, you have to be sure you are crowding your opponent and stopping him from setting himself, because, if they are much bigger and stronger than you, then allowing them to be in good alignment will always end badly for you.

When it comes to playing the bottom position, the idea is similar - prevent your opponent from successfully applying their weight and strength against you. The two best tools you are going to have here are spider guard and butterfly hooks.

Spider guard, with feet positioned either on the biceps, or as a shallow or deep lasso, is an exceptional tool for controlling a larger opponent. Not only does it impair their posture and their alignment, it allows you to maintain a distance where you are at your strongest and can apply the full strength of your legs against their already compromised positioning. From there, you can try to get your body under theirs, pick up a leg, move to their back - any of a number of different attacking options.

One of the most important considerations here, however, is that you cannot let your hips get too high. One of the best counters to the spider guard for a larger man is to try to get under your hips and stack, so trying to keep your hips grounded and away will make it much harder for them to take away that distance as well as, frankly, fold you in half.

You also have to be very wary when going for attacks, particularly with triangles. A lot of attacks will require raising your hips to lock over your opponent's shoulders or neck, but if those attacks fail, then you will have created a huge amount of space underneath yourself that your opponent will be able to take advantage of. So, you have to be very aware of when an attack is worth pursuing, or when it's not going to work and you need to bail out back to a range where you aren't in danger and can set up another attack instead.
When not attacking, a lasso grip is also a very strong tool as it helps to check your opponent's shoulders and create an entanglement that stops them closing that last few centimetres to go from merely threatening to really dangerous.

Once a larger opponent has successfully gained control of your hips (usually by forcing you into half guard or closed guard), you are now generally too close to them to establish your spider guard position and get to an optimal range for either offense or defense. The first step to creating that space is generally to use butterfly hooks, whether from half guard or full guard. Placing just one hook inside your opponent's thighs will give you a better inside control for creating space as well as helping you to get onto your side to create even more space.

In addition, the threat those hooks create to your opponent's base also make them less likely to want to drive into you, for fear of being redirected or off-balanced. A sweep attempt with the butterfly hooks that fails will still often prompt your opponent to retreat and give you enough space to establish a different kind of guard and prevent them from pressuring you any more.

You can even use them when an opponent has underhooked your legs, to attach yourself under your opponent's legs, so that if they want to lift you, they have to lift your weight as well as their own, which will generally make it impossible for them to stack you. On the other hand, this will partially open you up to step-over passes and other similar annoyances, so the hooks will need to be kept relatively close to your body. Reaching too much when putting in hooks will usually cause more problems than it solves.

Next time, I will take a look at the mechanical advantages and disadvantages that female grapplers have, and some of the ways they can use these tools to their benefit on the mat. Until then!

"THE MOST IMPORTANT CONCEPT IN PLAYING THE TOP GAME FOR A SMALLER ATHLETE IS TO PREVENT THE BOTTOM ATHLETE SUCCESSFULLY APPLYING THEIR FULL STRENGTH"

WORDS: SAM JOSEPH
PICTURES: DANIEL BRISENO

CHOOSING THE RIGHT BJJ SCHOOL

When I started training in the late 1990's, all you could hope for was to find a Brazilian Jiu Jitsu academy nearby. Now, in most major cities, there are at least a couple of BJJ schools to choose from.

Contributing factors for this growth range from the explosion of awareness due to the success of BJJ in the UFC to the positive experiences that thousands have had with the sport. Today, the question is more often, "Where will we train?" as opposed to "Is there BJJ in my area?" as there are usually options. This is a very important question as the right choice can springboard you into a lifetime of training, fun and fulfillment while the wrong one can see you quitting and leaving all those benefits behind. To that end, here are some key factors to consider when choosing a Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Academy.

THE INSTUCTORS

The coaching staff can have enormous impact on your experience both at the gym and with BJJ in general. With that in mind, here are some things worth thinking about:

Can you learn from the coaching staff?

This is less about the coaches' credentials and more about compatibility in relevant areas. In today's world, credentials are easily verified via google and the IBJJF. In a matter of minutes you can confirm someone's rank, achievements in the sport and often find both instructional and competition video featuring prospective teachers. As indicated earlier, there are more qualified BJJ instructors than ever before so you can now consider compatibility in two areas: teaching/learning and philosophy.

To enjoy BJJ long-term, you have to be comfortable learning from your coach. Sometimes this will come easily as their communication style will seamlessly fit your way of learning, but often this is something that takes work. Great coaches do much of that work by proactively communicating different ways and testing for understanding, but this is not a one-way street. Great students can also participate in this process by taking accountability for their BJJ education and filling in whatever gaps there may be.

An honest assessment of the natural fit and how much work you are willing to put into the learning process will give you clarity as to whether the situation will be satisfactory over time or if you will need to look elsewhere. There needs to be a level of comfort in the learning relationship if you are to make the best choice of your BJJ home.

How do you feel about your coaches' BJJ philosophy?

Also crucial is accord in BJJ philosophy. To be clear, I am not saying that you have to agree on EVERYTHING with your coach. Brazilian Jiu Jitsu is a part of life and not visa-versa. I mean to say that there should not be major divergences in areas like

Sam Joseph is a 2nd degree Black Belt in BJJ under the Yamasaki Academy. He was awarded his black belt in 2007 and has vast experience as a teacher, BJJ competitor and MMA fighter.

"GREAT COACHES DO MUCH OF THAT WORK BY PROACTIVELY COMMUNICATING DIFFERENT WAYS AND TESTING FOR UNDERSTANDING, BUT THIS IS NOT A ONE-WAY STREET"

respect, overall attitude and behaviour as they relate to the sport.

A well-known example of how a conflict here can blow-up is the recent situation involving Marcelo Garcia, one of the greatest athletes and instructors in BJJ history, and the two black belts he had to suspend: Dillon Danis and Mansher Khera. As he explains in his public YouTube video addressing the situation, Marcelo felt like the fundamental differences between his BJJ code and the behavior of these two talented black belts made it necessary for them to part ways. Regardless of who is right or wrong, the fact is that there is division where there would not be if there were philosophical agreement. Early consideration of whether you can live with your coaches' BJJ philosophy will help you avoid a painful future outcome.

Do you trust your coaches to invest in you?

The best coaches are not just excellent technically but also have a love for seeing their students learn and grow. Former UFC fighter and Renzo Gracie black belt, Paul Creighton, runs a highly successful academy, Creighton MMA, in Suwanee, Georgia. We have been friends for years and one of my favorite topics when we get together is the development of his students. I have listened to him gush about students from white to black belt, competitors to hobbyists…all across the spectrum. The common thread is always that they are growing in the sport and BJJ is enriching their lives. It is easy to see why his students are thriving as his love for and commitment to investing in them is obvious. When deciding on an academy, you would do well to find a coach as worthy as Paul Creighton of entrusting such a key role in your BJJ future.

THE ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY

As influential as the coaching staff can be, the students will always outnumber them and will have just as much or maybe even more impact on your BJJ experience. Leaders will set rules and offer guidelines but your teammates will walk with you and share the daily ups and downs characteristic of the BJJ trek.

As you try out an academy, ask yourself if the atmosphere is one you feel like fits your personality and BJJ goals? Is it a "competition school" where all the focus is on the serious athletes while you are more of a hobbyist? Are the classes geared more towards self-defense while you are more interested in the sport? Is it a "formal" place where there are lots of rules about bowing and etiquette while you are looking for a more casual or intimate vibe? Questions like these will help you determine whether you will enjoy the place over time.

Also, can you see yourself making friends at the gym? I feel an under-appreciated aspect of BJJ is how "social" it is. Some of my greatest friendships have sprouted from the practice mat. Teammates are often more likely to truly relate to you wherever you are in real-time, more than your coaches. Taking the community and how you might fit into consideration early on helps you set yourself up for success.

CONVENIENCE

You can find the best gym in the world but if you cannot make classes, due to schedule or distance, it will not do you any good. For an academy to have real impact on your life, you must be able to participate. Honestly look at whether the schedule and commute allow you to take enough advantage of what it offers. If not, you may want to consider another place to train. Self-deception in this area will only lead to an unfulfilling experience that may lead to quitting the sport all together.

CONCLUSION

Using these guidelines will help you navigate through what can be a difficult choice of where to train Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. The good news is that the hard work on the front end will ensure an incredible adventure in the sport and lifestyle. That reward is well worth the effort!

See you on the mat! ■

WORDS: MATT JARDINE
PICTURES: CALLUM MEDCRAFT

A ROADMAP TO SUCCESS

Sometimes, meandering through life with no direction is fun: even liberating. To trust the breeze to take you in whichever direction it blows, and to set you down on whatever metaphorical 'seat of the pants' you might be wearing, is very Zen.

Arguably, one of the things that attracts many non-Brazilian students into the BJJ community is the 'relaxed carioca' mindset. If you come from the subtly repressed and stalwart upbringing that many Brits and Europeans enjoy (?), the freer ways of Brazil are refreshing. It is the ways of our hot-blooded friends that also cause us endless frustration though.

Since the arrival of Mauricio Motta Gomes (the inimitable father of Roger Gracie) on UK shores in the 1990's, and the subsequent spreading of the BJJ gospel, Jiu Jitsu schools, academies and dojos have grown exponentially. We welcomed the Brazilians and their 'art suave' with open arms. But as much as we wanted their kinship, and loved their South American attitudinal antidote to our stoic and cynical post-war ways, we also wanted the education in martial arts that they were proselytising.

Between us, my wife and I share close to fifty years of teaching experience both within schools and peripatetically, academically and physically. We have had the good fortune to teach around the world to every social class, gender and age imaginable. It is an honour to have a life rotated on the axle of pedagogy.

We have seen, certainly within mainstream academic education, that inspection and regulation by governing bodies such as OFSTED (The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) and ISI (Independent School Inspectorate) ensure that schools are providing students with consistently high levels of education. For those who are not, the same governing bodies provide help, support and guidance to bring these failing schools up to speed.

But outside the school environment, the accountability to high teaching standards is neither centrally governed nor guaranteed, leaving sports, martial arts and other extracurricular activities to, shockingly, self-regulate. Instead, the weight of quality control rests heavily on the shoulders of business owners, private club/academy/dojo owners and their teaching staff. While the good intentions of these education providers, in most cases, cannot be called into question, maybe their experience in self-governance can.

Over ten years ago, the Karate community faced the same challenges and, in all fairness to them, the powers-that-be rallied to try and rectify the situation. Universities offering vocational education, training and qualification for instructors were twinned with dojos, to unify and improve the teaching of the martial art.

As a senior instructor for some years, I was asked to join a panel of assessors that would visit dojos and academies nationwide to report on teaching standards. My job was to assess if the university-taught standards and skills were being upheld. This article is based on one of the most damning problems I encountered within self-regulating martial arts and some suggestions on how to help.

GPS MADE GSP

Love him or hate him, it is undeniable that veteran MMA superstar, George Saint Pierre, changed the face of MMA with his focused and directed approach to martial arts training.

Back then, when MMA learning was noticeably more chaotic, he and his team applied a clear, concise, relevant and efficient approach to learning. It was much like the GPS the majority of us use to get from point A to point B in our cars today. He was a shining example that martial arts could apply logic, reason and method in both its learning and application (you can watch this methodology in play by watching any of GSP's fights- maybe not pretty, but undeniably effective and efficient.)

A ROAD MAP TO SUCCESS

In contrast, and with my assessor's hat on, what strikes me most about the many BJJ and martial arts schools I have visited and trained in over the years, is the lack of coherent teaching structure within the majority of them.

While the fighting standards are undoubtedly high, the right intentions of the academies and their instructors guaranteed, and the knowledge therein, outstanding, I can't help but observe that overall progress could be more efficient with the inclusion of one simple pedagogic priority: a teaching syllabus.

LONDON TO BIRMINGHAM- VIA EDINBURGH

To return to GPS and the analogy of driving as example, consider planning a trip from London to Birmingham. If you chose the quickest possible route on your Sat Nav, it is unlikely to take you via Edinburgh. Much of the teaching structure within BJJ academies worldwide, however, attempt to reach their long-term goals with precisely this type of haphazard route.

Undoubtedly this is not an intentional path of choice, but the lack of an overarching syllabus and coherent teaching structure inevitably leads to the equivalent of driving in the dark with the lights out. We may reach the pinnacles of excellence, eventually, but with more strain than is necessary and with many casualties along the way (through unnecessary student fall-out, injury and learning dissatisfaction).

At worst, many academies have no teaching syllabus whatsoever; at best a syllabus is in place but could be improved; and somewhere in between lies an unwritten curriculum, of sorts, that is unofficially bandied around by senior instructors who may, or may not, adhere to it, sometimes!

WHAT IS A SYLLABUS AND WHY IS IT ESSENTIAL?

A syllabus is one of those words that we all know, but probably couldn't precisely define or identify its qualities. A syllabus is a document that contains essential information about the class, course or workshop the student will be attending. Typically, the syllabus will include:

- Biographical information about the school and its instructors including relevant teaching qualifications
- School policies: expected levels of behaviour/ dojo charter
- An overview description of the topics taught at each level/module
- A list of requirements and learning goals each student will need to satisfy for each level/module. These will include technical, tactical, physical and sometimes mental skills
- Details of assessment of competence and how

"AT WORST, MANY ACADEMIES HAVE NO TEACHING SYLLABUS WHATSOEVER; AT BEST A SYLLABUS IS IN PLACE BUT COULD BE IMPROVED"

both student and teacher will know that the appropriate levels of attainment have been fulfilled (attendance criteria, formal grading/examination, demonstration, competition success, etc.)
• A list of any other requirements, fulfillments or information the school feels its students should know

Syllabi that include all the above basic requirements, not only provide vital information for students but also show them great care and organisation regarding structured and fully considered learning. In contrast, a shabby or, even worse, a non-existent syllabus, gives a negative impression to students by showing them that the school has not thought deeply about learning objectives. It may suggest that they are not overly committed to the high-quality learning experience of its students.

WHY DON'T MANY SCHOOLS HAVE A PROPER SYLLABUS?

From my experience, most cases of schools that failed in offering a quality teaching program were not malicious or uncaring, only inexperienced. The majority of martial arts schools are offered not as businesses but as a natural extension of passionate martial artists who only want to share what they know with others equally keen to learn.

Often, in these cases, money charged simply covers the cost of a hired space. Shared experience is the only profit. Teaching is sandwiched into the free time between a 'normal job' and sleep! In the case of the burgeoning proliferation of professional BJJ academies and businesses, again I would suggest that omissions of school syllabi are not sinister but, once again, down to inexperience.

Professional BJJ schools are still in their relative infancy. As centres of education, they have been in operation only as long as BJJ has been born (the early 1900's). This detail stands in stark contrast to the fact that the first European Universities were formed early in the high middle ages, 1000-1300AD. Regarding education delivery then, compared to Universities, BJJ schools are not yet even a white belt with a white stripe. We must allow them their infancy. We have a duty to support them.

CREATING A SYLLABUS

As important as a syllabus is for the student, it is equally vital, and helpful, for the teacher. With a syllabus in place, it makes it easier to plan and deliver lessons. This is particularly useful within the challenging and complicated context of the mixed ability environment that martial arts academies operate.

Even more useful in improving an instructor's teaching pedigree than teaching from a syllabus, is creating one from scratch. Setting to the task of creating your syllabus could be the most important exercise any teacher -beginner, intermediate or experienced - could ever invest their time on.

By considering the construction of a syllabus, a teacher is forced to acknowledge:

• strengths and weaknesses in their knowledge
• strengths and weaknesses in their students' knowledge and learning potential
• The logical and coherent flow of subject matter- how lessons are interdependent and how they intersect
• How students best learn and retain information
• How teachers best teach and consolidate vital information
• Cutting away unnecessary lessons - sorting the wheat from the chaff

With these considerations, both teacher and student are set to improve their learning experience. It is a win/win situation and worth the time and cerebral investment.

To conclude, these are my three tips for creating your syllabus:

1. BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND

To return again to our car journey analogy: start by thinking where it is you want to end up. Before getting in the car, do you know where you are going? If you are writing a syllabus for a potential blue belt BJJ student, for example, what skills and attributes would that student demonstrate to 'look and feel' like a blue belt?

2. BREAK THE JOURNEY INTO SMALL ACHIEVABLE PARTS

Once you have decided on the destination, break the journey into small parts. If going from London to Birmingham, my GPS will tell me precisely, one at a time, what roads I need to travel to complete my journey. Now that you know what your blue belt will 'look' like, what specific skills and qualities will they need to attain before becoming that athlete?

3. CHOOSE STEPS THAT TAKE YOU TO YOUR DESTINATION AS QUICKLY, DIRECTLY AND COHERENTLY AS POSSIBLE

As mentioned before, your GPS is unlikely to take you from London to Birmingham via Edinburgh. While you will eventually get to your destination, it is neither efficient nor conducive to a quality learning experience.

Using excessive and unnecessary effort is one of the biggest downsides of not having a good quality syllabus to follow: lessons are often disparate and mal-coordinated with no flow, coherence or logical sequence. Lessons delivered in this way have the sense of being 'ad-hoc' and made up, on the spot. They feel haphazard, disorganised and irrelevant to the previous lessons and those to follow.

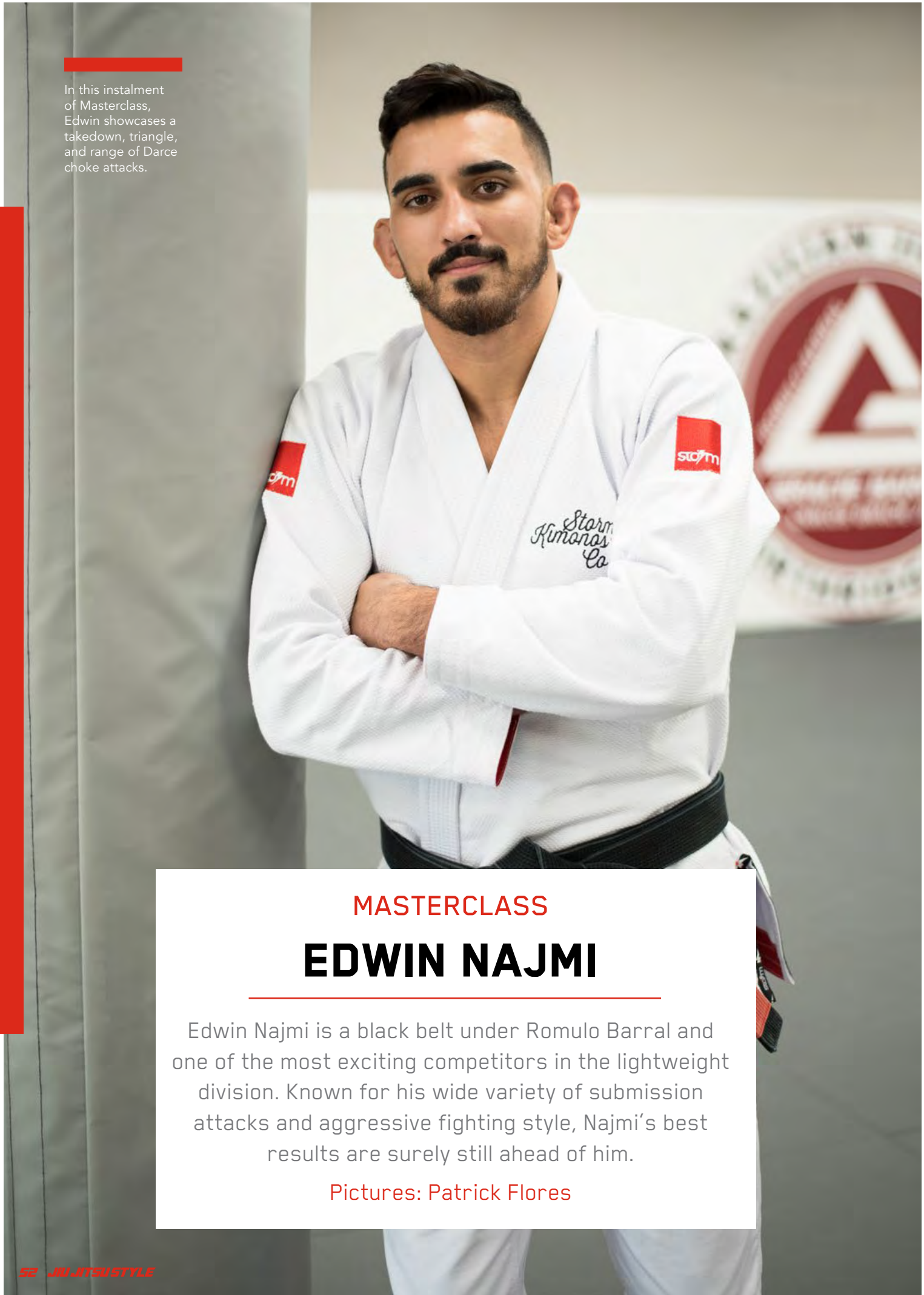
Although the information taught may be high quality, a lack of structured progression (as would be outlined in a syllabus) slows down the learning process. At best, it causes student frustration and, at worse, increases the likelihood of student dropout. Like many things, creating a syllabus is simple, but not easy. With care, consideration, focus and a passion for offering the best instruction to your students, it is achievable. If you follow the above three tips, they will make the process not only simpler but also inevitable.

BJJ has transformed our lives here on UK shores with its style, techniques and colourful culture. It has pierced our stiff collar ways and grey skies. And we are infinitely grateful to be welcomed into the community. So now it is time for us, the student, to give back to the teacher. It is time for us to share the knowledge and experience from our rich history of teaching and learning so that they can continue to share theirs.

As with all great education and learning relationships, it will be a collaboration of minds, ideas and techniques that enrich us all. And who knows, maybe this meeting of minds will lead to such pinnacles of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu instruction that, to honour it, a 'Jiu Jitsu University' will be built; a physical reality, and not just a three hundred and sixty-eight-page book!

Matt Jardine is an author, writer and teacher of the martial arts. He and his wife, Sheri, are as passionate about BJJ as they are about the art of teaching. They invite you to visit their teaching blog site: www.theartofteachingchildren.wordpress.com.

In this instalment of Masterclass, Edwin showcases a takedown, triangle, and range of Darce choke attacks.



MASTERCLASS

EDWIN NAJMI

Edwin Najmi is a black belt under Romulo Barral and one of the most exciting competitors in the lightweight division. Known for his wide variety of submission attacks and aggressive fighting style, Najmi's best results are surely still ahead of him.

Pictures: Patrick Flores

1: Starting with control of your opponent's collar and sleeve as pictured.

2: People can often telegraph the collar drag and start to back away from you, so push your opponent with your collar grip to get them to push back.

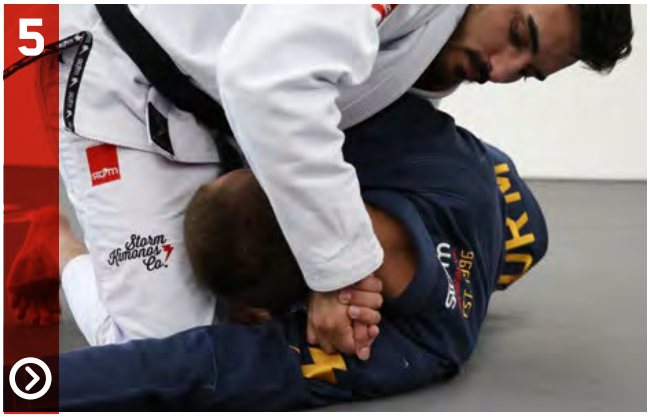
3/4/5/6: In one motion, step out with your left foot, pull on your opponent's collar and block their leg as pictured to secure the drag.

7/8: Maintain your grips and move forwards straight into knee-on-belly.

1: Following on from the collar drag technique, you are in knee-on-belly, and your opponent will always look to hook your hip and recover guard.

2: Lower your body posture and feed your left arm all the way underneath and past your opponent's right arm as pictured.

3/4/5: From here, push your opponent's head down until their chin hits their chest and lock off a palm-to-palm grip. A lot of people miss this step and start to lock off their bicep, rushing the choke and messing up.



6: Continue to apply pressure on the back of your opponent's head with your right forearm so that their head is pinned to their chest and very uncomfortable.

7/8: Sprawl backwards so that your opponent's right arm sits in front of your chest, before bringing your left knee up and against their chest. This position isn't really a submission, but the pressure is really on and your opponent will struggle to do much before you move on to the next attack.

1: Leading on from the gaining Darce choke control position, we are now going to look at how to finish. The big detail to mention here is that your left shoulder has to be below your opponent's right shoulder so that you can secure the grip properly as pictured.

2: Push your opponent's head down as you uppercut through with your left arm.

3/4/5: Once you've moved your left arm through, lock your hand against your right bicep and make sure you then bring your right hand against your opponent's shoulder.

6: Drop your right elbow to the mat, squeeze your arms together and secure the tap.

1/2: Often your opponent will try to alleviate the pressure from the choke by putting their back on the mat.

3: As they try to put their back on the mat, try to sprawl backwards.

4/5/6: Next, maintain the pressure running through your upper body, but hook your opponent's top leg with your left leg.

7/8: One detail here is that you must turn the angle of your left leg, almost like you're knee slicing; this stops your opponent from putting their back on the mat even more. Most of the time you can finish the choke from here.

9/10/11/12: If your opponent is super tough, and still manages to put their back on the mat, just go with their movement and roll so that you end up on bottom. Keep their leg secured and squeeze from the bottom – the choke will be even tighter from this position.

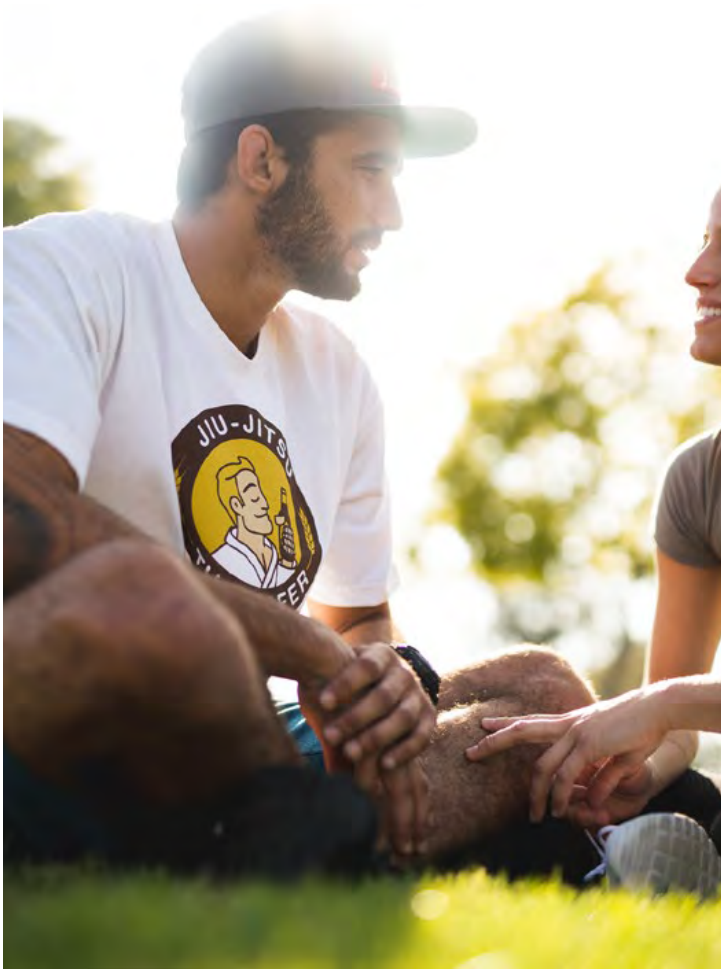
1: Sometimes you just can't secure the Darce grips when your opponent is hooking your hip, but another option is the triangle choke.

2/3: Drive your right knee across your opponent and down to the mat, while lifting their right elbow to maintain control of their arm.

4: Next, step up on your right foot in front of your opponent's shoulder to start the triangle.

5/6: Pull your opponent's head upwards and bring your right shin behind their head.

7/8: Move your body off to the right to create a little bit of space to lock off the triangle, remembering to pull up on their right arm throughout the whole process.


JIU-JITSU

JIU JITSU
Jiu Jitsu

JIU-JITSU
THEN BEER

In this issue, Castelle shows some of his favourite attacking options off the Imanari Roll.

SHEDDING THE GI

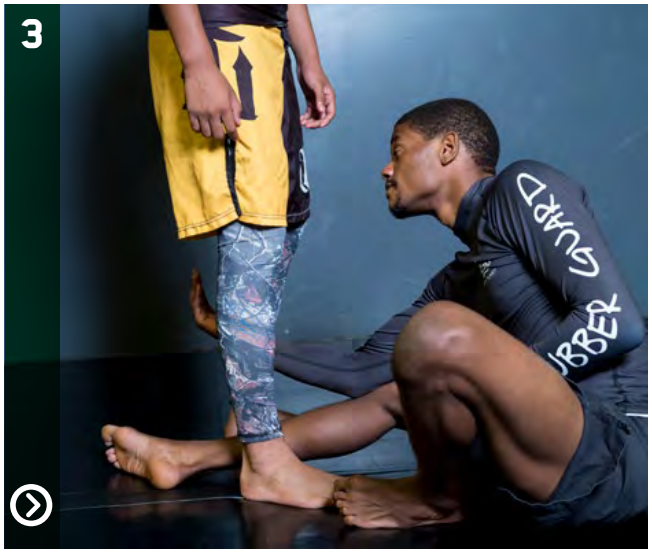
MARVIN CASTELLE

Marvin Castelle is a 10th Planet brown belt under Eddie Bravo who shot to fame after his heel hook victory on Fight To Win Pro hit 10million views on social media! As you'd expect of a 10th Planet fighter, Marvin has a leg lock focused game.

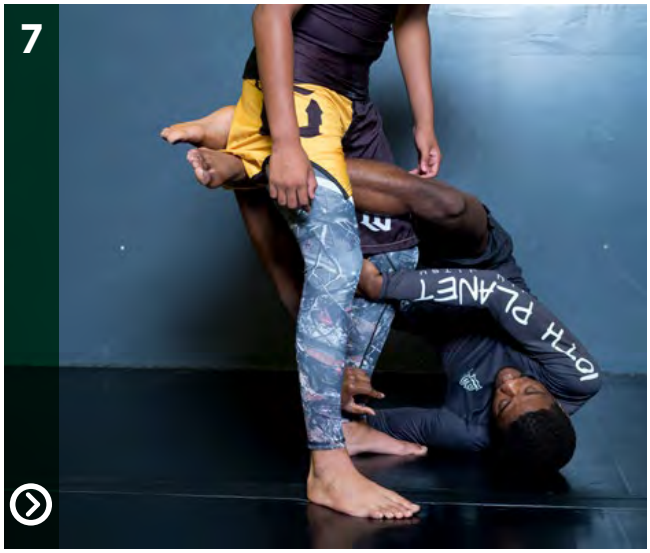
Pictures: Ric Ricard

1: Starting in front of your opponent with your arm up to block their field of vision.

2/3/4: Shoot your right leg between your opponent's legs, at the same bringing your arm on the inside of their left thigh.



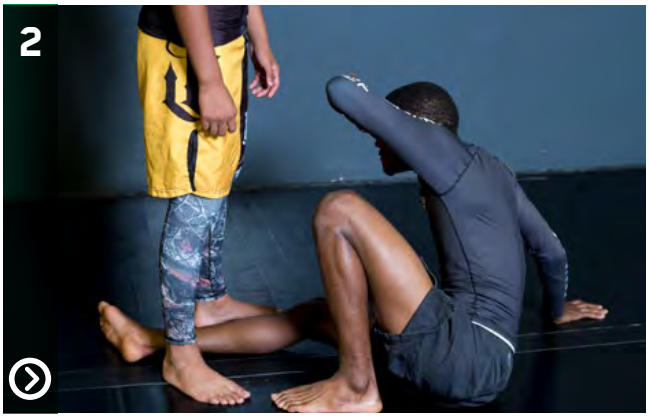
5/6/7/8: Roll over your right shoulder, bringing your body over your opponent's left leg, locking off a triangle. Pull their heel and lift your hips to drop them to the mat.



9/10: Switch your hips to the right in order to gain an attacking angle.

11/12: Secure the heel hook grip as pictured to finish the submission.

1: Starting in front of your opponent with your arm up to block their field of vision.



2/3: Shoot your right leg between your opponent's legs, at the same bringing your arm on the inside of their left thigh.

4/5/6: Roll over your right shoulder, bringing your body over your opponent's left leg, locking off a triangle. Pull their heel and lift your hips to drop them to the mat.

8: From here, switch your hips out to the right and keep your opponent's leg tight to your chest. Switch to a rear naked choke grip and drive your hips forward to finish the submission.

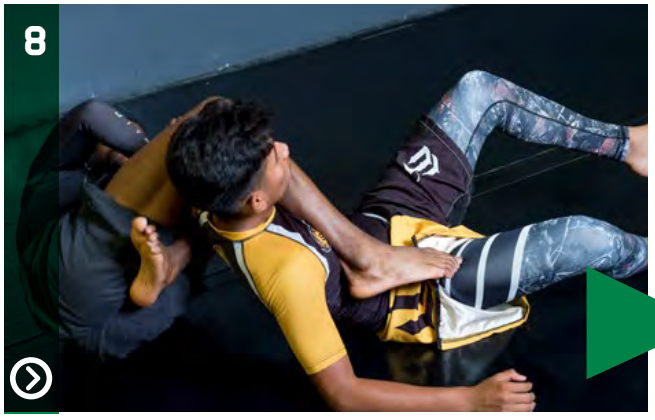
1: Starting in the honey hole position ready to attack your opponent's leg.

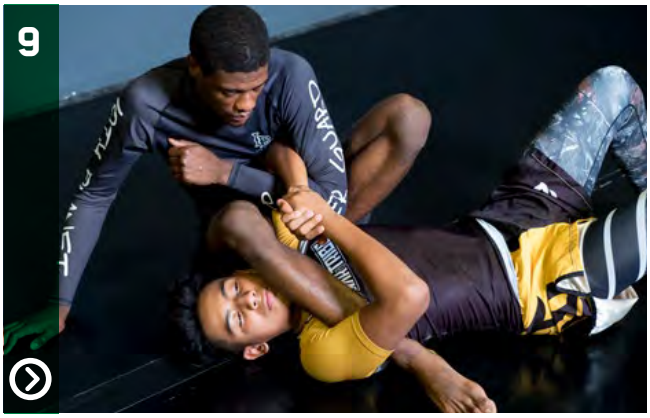
2: This time, your opponent is defending their legs well and you can't attack the heel hook or knee bar.

3: Extend your right leg and fall back on your right shoulder. You should start to create space to clear your legs

4/5: Push your opponent's left leg away from you and your own left leg towards you.

6/7/8: Underhook your opponent's left arm as pictured, then start to roll all the way over your right shoulder to secure an armbar position.



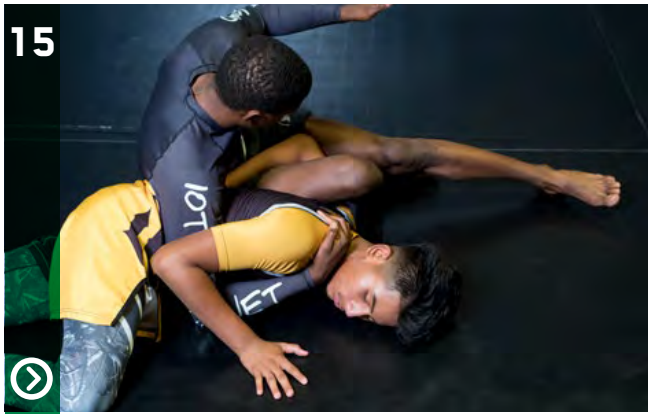


9: Often your opponent does a good job of defending the armbar.

10: Shift the position of your right leg so that your foot is against your opponent's body, at the same time switch your hand grip so you control their left tricep with your right arm.

11/12/13: From here, roll forwards over your right shoulder to lock off the omoplata.

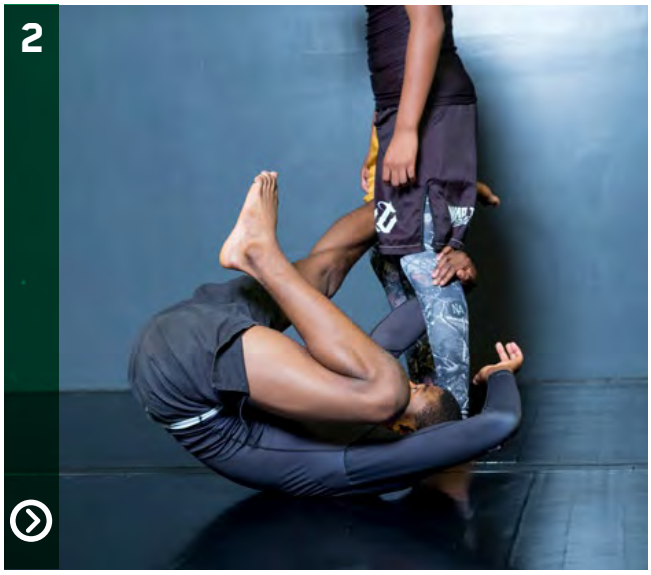
14: As you land with your butt on the floor, make sure you underhook your opponent's right shoulder to prevent them from rolling.



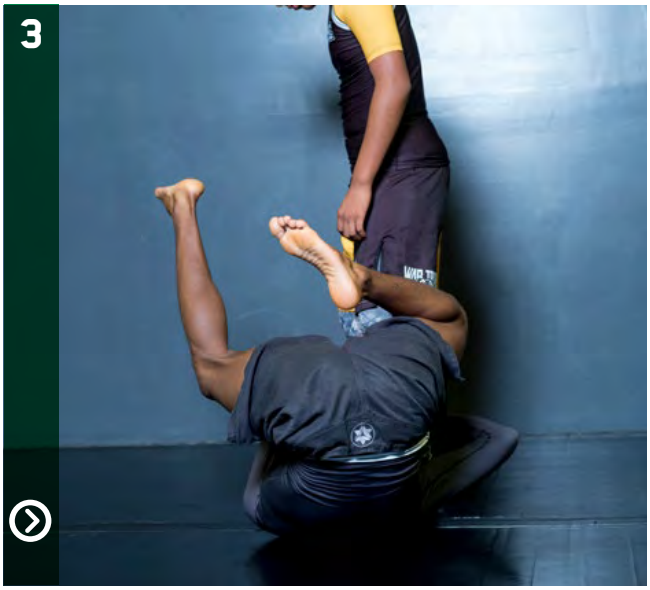
15/16: Extend your legs and engage your core to sit up and finish the submission.

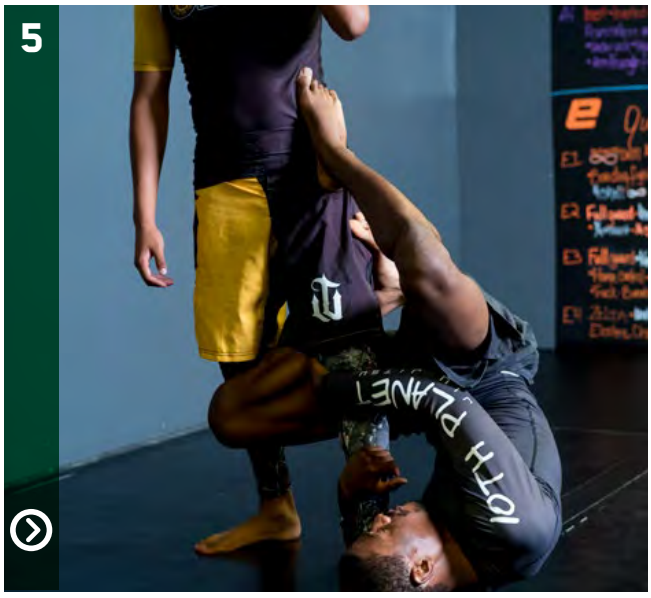
IMANARI ROLL TO GUARD PASS

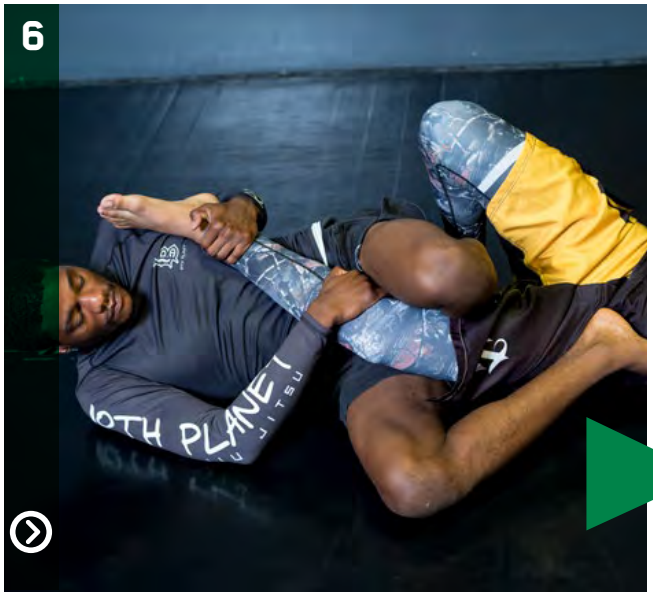
1: Shoot your right leg between your opponent's legs..



2/3/4/5/6: Roll over your right shoulder, bringing your body over your opponent's left leg, locking off a triangle. Pull their heel and lift your hips to drop them to the mat.







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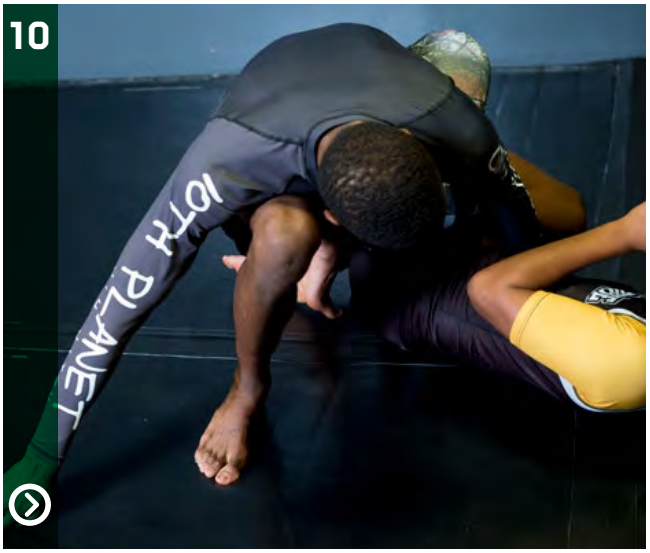
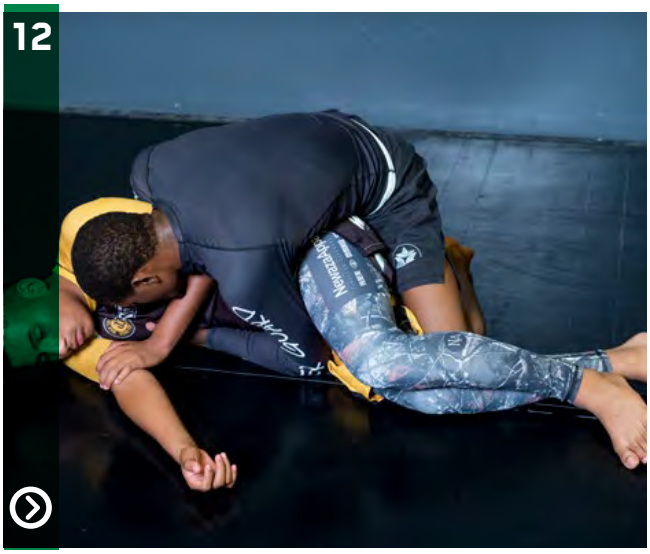
7: Bring your left hand over your opponent's right knee to initiate the leg drag.

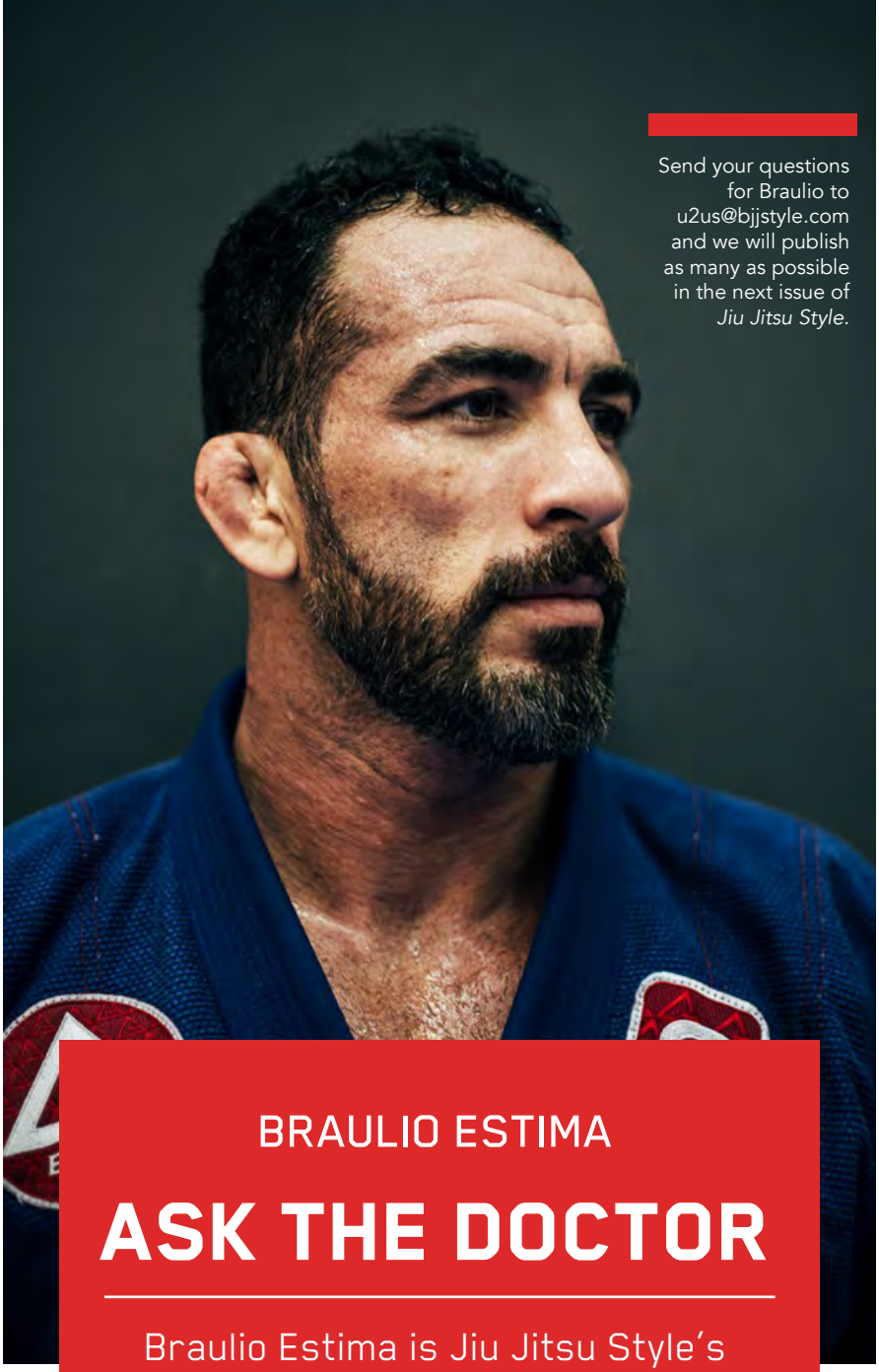
8: Base out on your right hand.

9. Advance your left hand to control your opponent's hip as pictured.



10/11/12: Come up onto your right foot and drive your weight forward to secure the guard pass and solidify the position.





Send your questions for Braulio to u2us@bjjstyle.com and we will publish as many as possible in the next issue of *Jiu Jitsu Style*.

BRAULIO ESTIMA

ASK THE DOCTOR

Braulio Estima is Jiu Jitsu Style's resident BJJ Doctor, helping prescribe our readers just the right tonic of tips to improve their grappling game.

Hi Braulio,
Looking back at Roger Gracie's match with Buchecha, I still can't believe just how dominant Roger was. As someone who trains with him a lot, and as a world champion yourself, what would you say are the qualities that make him stand out as an athlete?

- Rory

Hi Rory,
So, first off, I wasn't surprised by the actual result on the night; the only thing that I was maybe surprised about was how quick the result came. One of the biggest qualities Roger has is that he's able to shut down your game straight away and not let you 'start'. I feel like we see people fight head to head a lot, and often the person who's just a little bit stronger, or more resilient, is the one who wins. Roger just doesn't let you start to fight.

I like to compare the way Roger fights to the idea that it's hard to stop a truck from speeding down a hill if you try to push back halfway down, but it's easy if you hit the handbreak before it starts to gain momentum. Roger hits the handbreak on fighters before they can start their game. If you look at the actual fight, Roger grabbed Buchecha's left hand to stop him going for the leg lock, and he didn't let go of that hand until he was ready to attack the collar. He stopped Buchecha from getting out the blocks.

At the end of the day, Roger's main strength is that he will ALWAYS make the most of a mistake. You just can't make a mistake when fighting him – trust me, I know!

Hi Braulio,
I am trying to incorporate more self-defence into the curriculum at my academy, but in all honesty the students don't seem to be taking to it (the more experienced students). What's your opinion on self-defence and its role in BJJ and how (if at all) do you incorporate this into your school curriculum?

- Perry

Hi Perry,
Self-defence is a very important aspect of all martial arts, and in jiu jitsu we teach basic movements that will then be used in all sorts of situations. Jiu jitsu is very real; we challenge ourselves every day on the mat with sparring, so self-defence can be more of an awareness exercise once you've been training for a while. I do think it's so important to focus on the self-defence curriculum when you first start, because it gives you an idea of what the art is about before you can really 'feel' what it's about through sparring.

Once you have trained for some time, you can find self-defence – and its methodical delivery – a little boring. But, you must learn everything so that when you're a black belt you are able to pass this knowledge on to your students who will need it just as you did. I would really suggest integrating the self-defence elements within your fundamentals curriculum – that's what I do at my academy.

Passing Lasso Guard

Hi Braulio,
How do you deal with someone who has ridiculously strong lasso grips? I really struggle to deal with the lasso grip.

- Carol

Hi Carol,
Yeah, lasso grips can be a real pain in the ass. However, this is a new approach I've been looking at and it's starting to work very well.

1. Your opponent has secured lasso guard control. 2/3. Start to stand up, bringing both of your legs around your opponent's left leg to isolate it. 4/5. Fall backwards down to the mat. This may seem risky, but your control of your opponent's right leg prevents them from coming on top. 6. As you can see, this starts to kill the lasso grip. 7. Grip your opponent's right leg with both hands. 8/9/10/11. Base out with your left hand on the mat, then start to come up on top straight into a leg drag pass.

Hi Braulio,
What do you do away from the mats, if anything, to improve your cardio when sparring? Also, how do you structure your actual sparring classes, more specifically YOUR training, when trying to get your lungs up to speed for competition.

- Jane

Hi Jane,
So, I think that a little bit of strength and conditioning to harden your body, to give you structure, is important. I see it as a way to make your body stronger for jiu jitsu; building on your armour. I am sure we all know people who only do jiu jitsu and those who do too much strength training, but for me, I like to just do enough so that it helps with my sparring.

I believe you need to have your full energy ready for sparring, so if you arrive too tired from strength training, you will end up just playing your 'A' game on the mat and not opening up for development. At the end of the day, if you want to be a champion marathon runner, you need to get your runs in, if you want to be a swimmer, you need to get your lengths in; same thing with jiu jitsu.

In terms of my training, I like to apply lots of short length rounds of specific training when fighting guys of my level. If I am training with guys of a lower level, I set myself challenges to push my cardio, like saying 'I must pass to the right', or 'I must submit three times' etc. This is a great way to get your cardio up when the level of your training partner is varied as well.

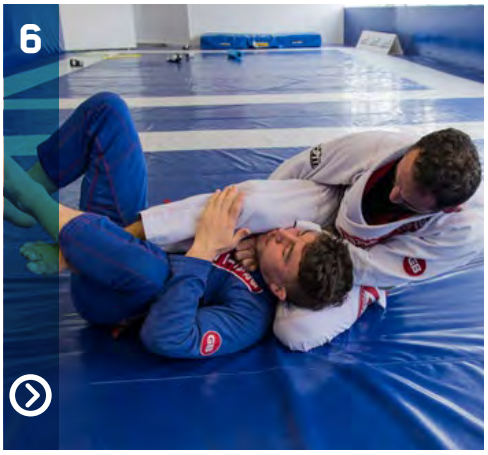
Deep Half Guard Counter

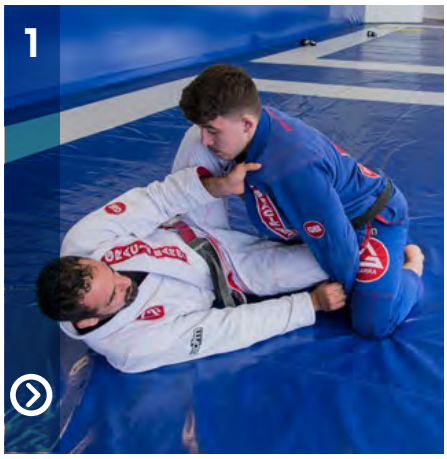
Hi Braulio,
How do you deal with deep half guard, if the guy managed to get into a solid sweeping position? Once they get 'deep' I struggle to get back to the right position. Help for a distinctly average blue belt!

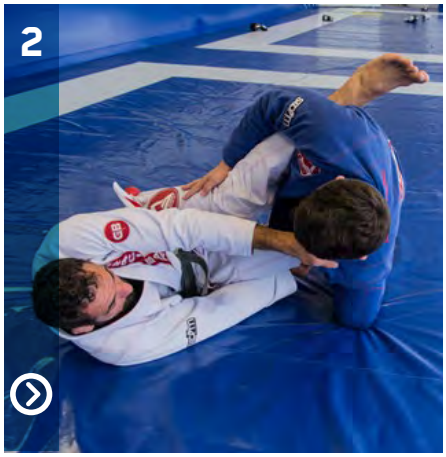
- Matt

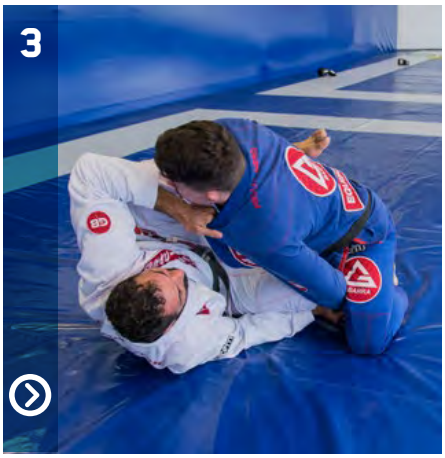
Hi Matt,
Here's a really cool choke that I've been working on recently. The great thing about this technique is that even if you don't get the choke, they cannot come on top.

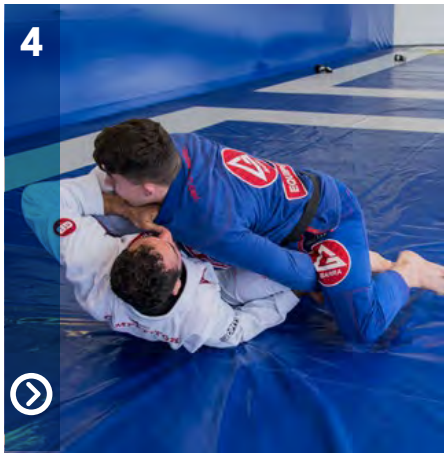
1. Your opponent has reached deep half guard. 2/3. Bring your weight forward and reach back to control your opponent's collar as pictured. 4. Sit back down on your opponent and control their left lapel with your left hand. 5/6. From here you can lean your weight backwards and apply a really nice collar choke.

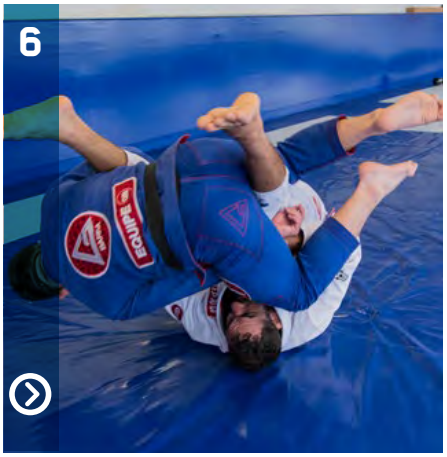


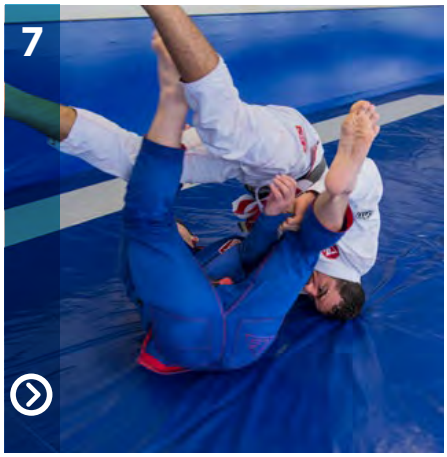


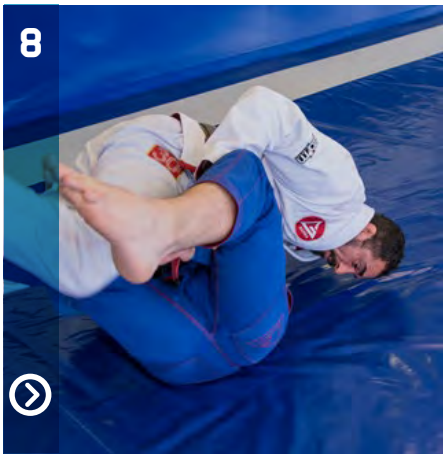


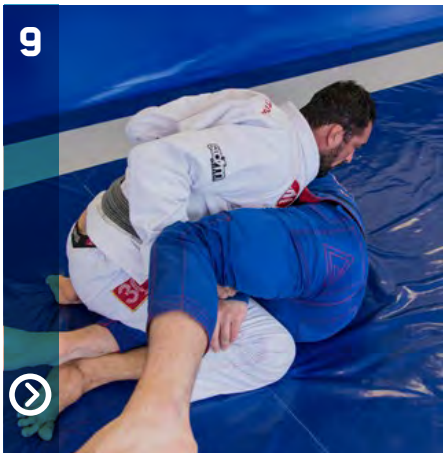










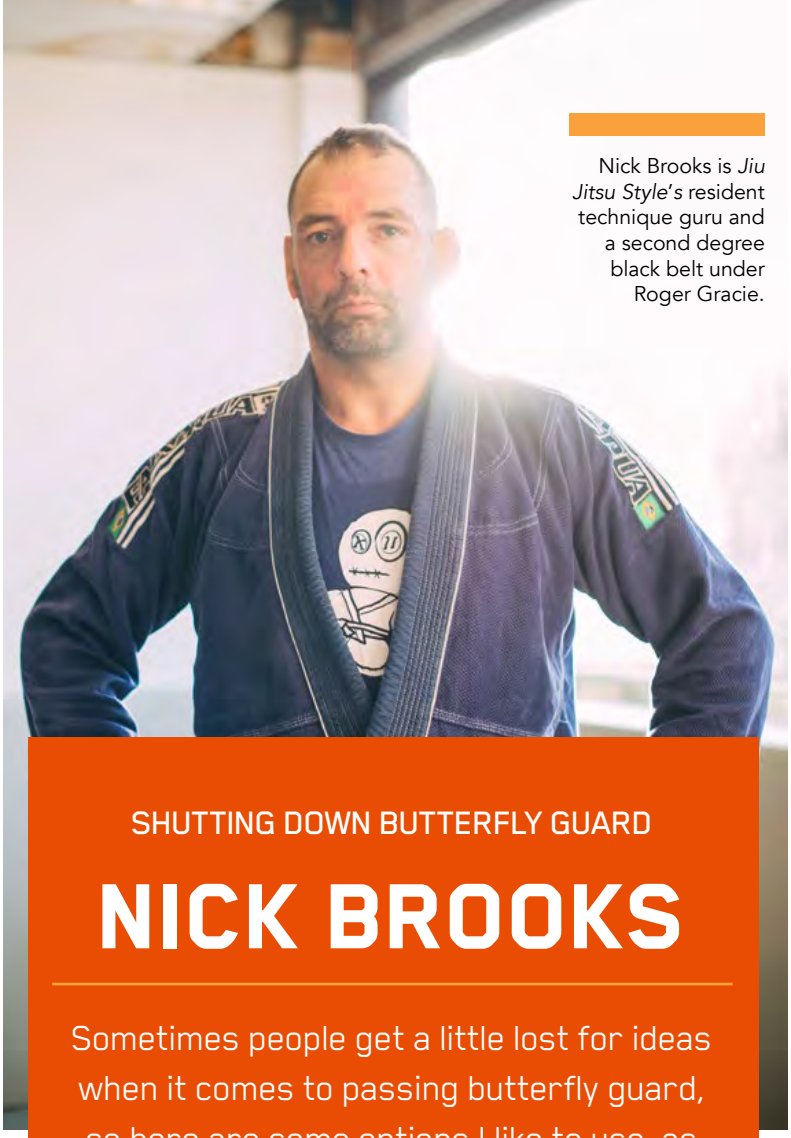


Knee Shield Half Guard Sweep

Hey Braulio,
I manage to play knee shield half guard quite well from a defensive perspective, but it would be great if you were able to show some attacking options; sweeps or submissions.

Hi there,
I find this sweep works very well for me, and it's not a risky movement where you could jeopardise your position.

1. Starting in knee shield half guard with control of your opponent's right collar and left sleeve. 2. Start to off-base your opponent to create a reaction by pushing their right arm between your legs and extending your left leg. This will force your opponent to drive their weight back towards you. 3/4/5. As soon as you feel your opponent's weight on top of you, pull your left arm back towards you and bring your knees to your chest - this will result in your opponent's whole weight coming on top of your body. 6/7/8/9. As soon as your opponent's weight comes on top of you, use the momentum to roll over your left shoulder, extending your legs to sweep overhead and arrive on top.



Nick Brooks is *Jiu Jitsu Style*'s resident technique guru and a second degree black belt under Roger Gracie.

SHUTTING DOWN BUTTERFLY GUARD

NICK BROOKS

Sometimes people get a little lost for ideas when it comes to passing butterfly guard, so here are some options I like to use, as well as a little detail on how to regain the guard when your opponent flattens you out.

1: Your opponent is in butterfly guard. Make sure to control their left lapel as pictured to prevent them getting the underhook they need.

2: Next, control their right lapel with your left hand.

3: Push your opponent's back to the mat, making sure to bring your hips as close as possible to their hips in order to compress their legs and prevent movement.

4: Break your left hip down to the mat and slide your right knee across your opponent's legs as pictured to remove the hooks.

5: Bring your right knee behind your opponent's right shin as you come back to a normal base position, remembering to keep your hips as close to your opponent's as possible in order to limit their movement.

6: Let go of their lapel with your left hand and secure a cross-face, at the same time control their right foot with your right hand.

7/8: Turn your hip, long-step backwards and sit down on the mat to pass your opponent's leg.

9: Finally, block their hip with your right arm and secure side control.

1: Your opponent is in butterfly guard. Make sure to control their left lapel as pictured to prevent them getting the underhook they need. Keep your right elbow tight to your body to help with this.

2: Next, control their right lapel with your left hand.

3: Push your opponent's back to the mat, making sure to bring your hips as close as possible to their hips in order to compress their legs and prevent any movement.

4: Put your head and right hand on the mat to the side of your opponent's hip and at the same time bring your left hand underneath their legs.

5/6/7/8: In a fluid motion, continue pinning their hips as you jump over their guard and arrive in side control.

1: Your opponent is in butterfly guard and has a cross collar grip. Grip the back of their collar with your left hand and apply downward pressure to break their posture. At the same time, control their left trouser with your right hand.

2/3: In a quick motion, pull your opponent's head backwards with your left hand, while rotating their body with your grip on their trouser.

4/5/6: Keep turning your opponent until you have cleared their legs and can progress through to side control.

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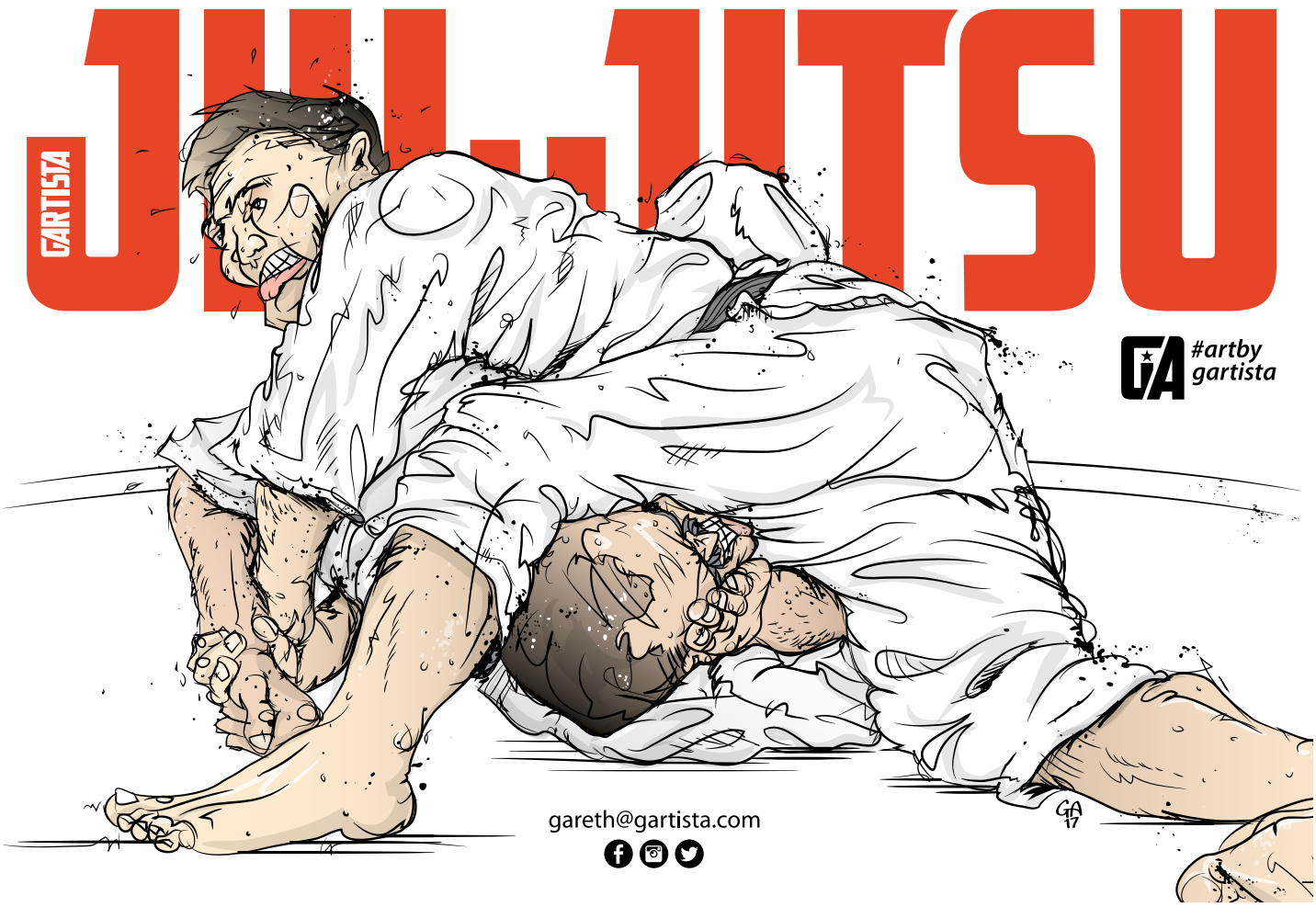
GARTISTA
JIU-JITSU
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1: Your opponent has managed to put your back on the floor and control your hips, killing butterfly guard.

2/3/4: Control your opponent's shoulders as pictured, then use your arms and legs to pull them on top of you, lifting their weight from their hips.

5/6: As you push your opponent backwards, use the momentum to sit up and get your back off the floor.

7/8: As you push your opponent backwards, use the momentum to sneak your right arm into an underhook position, ready to attack from your butterfly guard.

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ANDY MARSHALL is the owner of *Villain Strength* and a strength and conditioning expert. He has worked with notable professional athletes including heavyweight boxing contender, Dillian Whyte, and British grappling standout, Dan Strauss.

FIT TO FIGHT

3 POWERFUL WAYS TO MAKE THE MOST OUT OF TRAINING ALONE

There is no doubt that training with others will make your workouts more enjoyable and will also increase your performance. One major factor that separates the best gyms isn't exercise selection or how they program workouts, but is often the culture created by the people inside those gym walls.

Unfortunately, as we know too well, not everyone can always train at these facilities or even have a training partner. Some individuals have to train solo more often than not and this can create some obstacles. Motivation, accountability, and feedback will be limited in these scenarios, so the challenge is to create an environment in which to be successful.

Here are some easily accessible tools to get the most out of your training when you are forced to work out alone.

VIDEO RECORD YOUR LIFTS

The great thing about training with partners or group training is that you always have someone to watch your form and give feedback on lifts. When you're training alone there are some things you can't see or feel for yourself. Recording your sets allows you to play back your reps and see where you can improve technique.

Also, there will be times where a rep or set doesn't feel great. You may think the bar moved slowly, you broke form, or your positioning was off. Often your mind plays tricks on you though and the video shows the lift wasn't as bad as you thought. It's funny how often a lift may feel like crap and then you're surprised that it was clean on tape!

Another benefit of video is that it will give you an accurate measure of progress over time. Training alone means you don't have a coach to track your training or a training partner to point out that you're moving the bar better compared to 12 weeks ago. Progress does not have to be marked by more weight on the bar. More reps at a certain weight and even lifting a weight with more ease and better technical proficiency means progress. Seeing and measuring this less than obvious progress is important. By keeping some videos you will not miss out on seeing your improvements.

> "MOTIVATION, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND FEEDBACK WILL BE LIMITED WHEN TRAINING ALONE, SO THE CHALLENGE IS TO CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH TO BE SUCCESSFUL"

USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO CREATE YOUR OWN ENVIRONMENT

To take video a step further, you can tie in social media to enhance your solo training. Using the power of the internet we can create an environment where people from all over the country/world can train together, regardless of their geographic location.

There are communities for individuals to receive online coaching, post videos, and receive feedback and guidance in their training. These communities have their own gym culture, environment and sense of family, just like you would find at a training facility. You and your friends can use different social media platforms, make them public or private, and then hold each other accountable in addition to helping assess and improve technique.

Facebook allows you to create your own group page to upload and comment on videos. Instagram allows private video messaging with your friends and followers as well. These social media platforms create a great forum to connect with anyone, at any time; essentially creating virtual training partners who will give you what you are missing when you train alone. If you miss a training session and don't post to your training group, everyone knows. There is no hiding and poor excuses won't be tolerated.

Accountability, coaching, and camaraderie can all be found through an online platform and there are many existing groups out there. I run an online group called *The Brotherhood of Iron*, don't hesitate to get in touch if it is something you feel could benefit your training.

FIND EXCITEMENT

A key to getting quality results is by training consistently. There will undoubtedly be stretches of time where heading to the weight room will be the last thing you want to do. Training with friends, team mates and coaches can help refill your willpower when it's running low. When you're by yourself, you need to find that willpower on your own. Even as a strength coach who works in a gym, I can say that I've dreaded training on some days; it happens to everyone. Sleeping in or binge-watching *Game of Thrones* can sometimes be more enticing than a trip to the gym.

Having something that triggers your motivation can be a huge factor in keeping you on track. You don't need a big fancy goal to motivate you; remember, it's about being able to show up day in and day out and not make excuses to miss training sessions. This motivational trigger should be something personal. For example, the shirts you wear while training remind you of the places that are special to you. Also, wear shirts from a top athlete/powerlifting company as a reminder of what level you want your lifting to be at one day.

Be creative with music. Make a pre-workout playlist. Title it something meaningful. You don't always have control over the radio at the gym and, honestly, that shouldn't matter 100% of the time. However, listening to a pre-workout playlist the night before you train, or on your walk over to the gym, can help you get excited and put you in the right mind-frame to crush your training session. It can shift your negative thoughts to positive ones.

It's often better to train with others. Your training environment and the people around you will always make a huge impact on your training. But, if you don't have that luxury and it's just you in the weight room, small reminders such as the shirt on your back, or the music in your ears, can carry you through that one day when you want to avoid the gym.

Be creative and find what motivates you. Create the environment you want to train in. You have the tools to make working out by yourself enjoyable. It's up to you to make it happen.

WORDS: MIKE LENG

CREATING A SMART NUTRITION PLAN

There is a great saying: "A man who understands principles can pick his own methods."

The problem these days is that everyone is trying to sell you methods and not telling you about principles. Pretty much all the diet plans that are popular at the moment (intermittent fasting, fasting, paleo, keto, low carb, IIFYM, carb back loading, etc.) are just methods; tools in a tool box to be used at the right time, with the right people. However, some of these plans don't even have good priorities, never mind principles.

Everything we do must have priorities. Without them we simply get lost and spend our time stumbling around in the dark without really achieving anything.

When I talk about having good priorities in your nutrition, what I mean is that when you set up a nutritional plan, what are the main factors that it will always address?

Speaking to many fighters their priorities look like this:

1. Body weight
2. Performance
3. Having treats or planned cheats to keep sane

Generally, fighters have to make weight. They have to step on a scale and be a certain weight on a certain day. Not achieving this can lead to loss of earnings, future chances to fight with that promotion and being seen as unprofessional or lazy by other fighters and fans. Given this, it makes sense that this would be the number one priority when it comes to nutrition plans!

The second is performance. When fighters are in the lead-up to a fight they train at a higher intensity more often than normal. Add in the calorie deficit mentioned in the first priority and the stress of having to manage a job, family and friends, can lead to poor performance in the gym and therefore on fight night. Because of this, fighters tend to focus only on what makes them feel good during a camp, allowing them to perform the training required.

The third is treats and planned cheats. Let's be honest here, most fighters associate a fight camp with being deprived and miserable. They tend to have cheat meals and days that allow them to have the foods that they are missing so that they don't go mad through the camp.

All of this makes sense, right? None of what I have mentioned sounds terrible or detrimental to becoming an improved fighter, but is there a better way? Could fighters have different priorities that would not only allow them to function more effectively in that fight camp, but also from one fight to the next? Instead of being an athlete that essentially yo-yo diets all the way throughout the year, why not change things around slightly to help overall improvement, not just in the current camp but between camps too?

The priorities I use for clients are as follows:

1. Health
2. Performance
3. Bodyweight

Firstly, any nutritional plan must focus on health. It is ridiculous to have a nutritional plan that does not have this as a priority. When the body is healthy, it will more easily lose weight or gain muscle as required, handle the demands of fighting better and fight off illness as the body is challenged by the increased intensity of training. When health is addressed overall, the body will transition between fight camps better with fewer aches, pain and injuries.

The second priority is performance, for many of the same reasons. Training performance is one of the things that cannot be compromised during a fight camp. It is this training and the recovery from this training that will improve you as a fighter. If your nutrition does not allow you to train at your very best, you will spend more time trying to survive the intense sessions rather than implementing your game plan and the techniques that you are working on.

Your nutrition must fuel your training without leaving you full and bloated. It must also allow you to recover optimally between sessions - not just so that you can recover but also so that you improve and grow all the way into a fight. There is no better feeling than getting faster, stronger and more technical all the way up to a fight.

The third is body weight. Many coaches in other fields often say that you should not focus on the number on the scale when implementing a sound nutrition plan. While they are right in respect of trying to get in shape for most sports, this does not apply to competing fighters. Fighters mostly compete in specific weight classes and therefore body weight must be a factor in any plan. Managing body weight successfully (in the off season as well as during a fight camp) is easy and effective without compromising the other two priorities of a great nutrition plan. If you don't compete, you can focus on the mirror and the tape measure.

How do those priorities fit in with a diet's principles? Should dieting even be a priority?

To be honest, there are not many bad reasons to diet, as long as you do it the right way. Every athlete would always be better with a little less fat and a bit more muscle. Excess body fat serves no purpose in combat sports, in my opinion. There is an argument that could be made for more leverage in certain moves or for feeling stronger, however I generally find that it is the overweight athletes who are making it. I have never spoken to a single person, athlete or otherwise, that didn't feel a hell of a lot better by getting in shape.

"YOUR NUTRITION MUST FUEL YOUR TRAINING WITHOUT LEAVING YOU FULL AND BLOATED. IT MUST ALSO ALLOW YOU TO RECOVER OPTIMALLY BETWEEN SESSIONS"

The problem comes in how to do it *right*.

When people say 'diet' they generally mean a nutrition plan of some description. Now, this can be to lose weight, lose fat, gain muscle or just to look after their health. The problem is that when people are looking to start a diet they get absolutely bombarded with a million diverse types, all claiming that their way is the best way to do things and that all the others are rubbish. This simply isn't true. Remember that all successful and sound diets must follow a few basic principles in order for them to be successful.

So, what are they? Let's take a look.

CALORIES

Calories are first on the list for everyone to focus on if they really want to get a good handle on their nutrition. Pretty much every diet that is marketed to the masses uses one trick or another to create a calorie deficit (removing food types, only eating for a certain portion of the day, placing restrictions on types of food etc). In every conclusive study that has been done, it has been proven beyond doubt that calories are still one of the biggest factors in determining dieting success.

Ask most people about nutrition and they will probably say something along the theme of "calories". A calorie is basically how much energy your body gets from ingesting foods and liquids. Certain foods have more calories per gram than others (fat being the highest, then carbs and protein). The idea is that if you burn off more calories than you take in, you will lose weight and if you take in more than you need you will add weight (hopefully muscle if you are training hard and ingesting the right foods at the right time, but more of that later).

However, this is with reference to WEIGHT and not to FAT. While most magazines would have you believe that losing weight is a good thing, it can be quite the opposite. I mean, who wants to lose those guns for a couple of pounds on the scale? (I know there is more to functional BJJ training than 'guns' but everyone loves guns...). This doesn't mean that calories don't play a part in nutrition. Firstly, we do need to ascertain how (and more importantly what) you are eating, and when. I highly recommend keeping a food log for a week or two as a starting point, so that you have a record of how much or how little you are eating.

When it comes to how many calories you should be consuming, many people recommend a certain number of calories for men and women. Personally, I think that it's so individual that a random number can't be slapped on everybody. In my opinion the best thing is to take the info from your food log so that you can get an average of what you are taking in at the moment, then adjust the amount from there (more on that in a bit).

MACRONUTRIENTS

This is the second most important principle that we must adhere to when setting up a nutrition plan. Macronutrients (or macros) are basically what your food is predominantly made of, i.e. protein, fats or carbohydrates. Some food will contain just one type of macro, but most will be made up of two or in some cases all three. To be more specific a macro is defined as:

macronutrient [mak□ro-noo´tre-ent]

An essential nutrient that has a large minimal daily requirement, including proteins, fats, carbohydrates, and water. The term sometimes specifically includes, and sometimes specifically excludes, minerals required in amounts greater than 100 mg daily: calcium, chloride, magnesium, potassium, phosphorus, sodium, and sulphur.

The topic of macronutrients has become a murky one lately, with the term itself becoming an industry buzz word (I've never known an industry to create so many trends, fads and buzz words as the nutrition industry). This can also be really confusing as Facebook and Instagram are constantly filled with promotions from people with great physiques who all recommend different things (eating clean, flexible dieting, insisting you can eat ice cream, etc.). Many will label every other method as old fashioned, or infer that their method is the only one that works. This just isn't the case at all.

In the past, we used to talk predominantly about a 'macro split'. This referred to what percentages of which macro made up your nutrition plan. For example, you could have 30% protein, 40% carbs and 30% fat. Some people may have 30% protein, 30% carbs, 40% fat. It all depends on how your program is set up to achieve a certain goal. Athletes who have a more intense training schedule may have higher carbs, while those looking to lose a bit of fat, or who aren't as active, may have a lower carb, higher fat diet. It is purely down to the individual and how they tailor their nutrition to suit their goals.

Setting up your macros is a very personal thing. There are many great calculators online that can give you a starting point, but it is the adjustment of these macros that will give you the best results.

NUTRIENT TIMING

Nutrient timing is just a posh way of saying 'when' you eat your macros. While there are some diet plans available that have nutrient timing as their primary method (e.g. carb back loading, skip loading etc.) calories and macros must come first. However, after those two principles, nutrient timing can have a massive effect on not only an athlete's training and results, but also on their ability to recover.

I've written about this in previous articles, but the basis is the following:

- *Protein at every meal*
- *Carbs around training*
- *Keep fats out of meals around training*
- *Lots of veggies*

FOOD COMPOSITION

This is basically the micronutrients that our food is made up of - the good stuff! The fact of the matter is that most of us don't eat enough nutritionally dense foods (fruits and veggies). This absolutely needs to change. Fighters cannot keep living on diets of chicken, rice and broccoli and expect to be living to a ripe old age, playing with their grandkids.

The sport of BJJ is an abusive one on the body. It is a high impact sport that wears down our tendons, affects our immune systems, damages our muscles and, in some extreme cases, can affect vital organs (ever wondered what bad, bad weight cuts can do to a liver and kidneys? Go and have a look). I'm going to be real with you. There are aspects of this sport that could kill you if you do not pay them attention and do them properly. There are factors that, if not addressed, will give you severe long term negative effects, not only on your performance but also your ability to be a husband/wife, father/mother and friend.

By now it should be blatantly obvious that your health needs to be your number one priority.

EAT SOME DAMN VEGGIES!!

Of course, there are some other minor things that you can also attend to, but if you focus on these nutritional priorities then you can pick your methods to fit your lifestyle and preferences, then adjust the methods based on the results you get. Take the time to learn the proper principles and you will be able to get a whole lot more from your nutrition, and therefore your training!

As always, please make sure you know what you are doing before making radical changes to your nutrition and please consult your doctor first. If you don't know what you are doing, then either hire a professional or talk to your coach. You use a professional to teach you to drive, teach you your sport or get you qualified for your career. Using a nutritionist is no different.

Stay Healthy,
Mike

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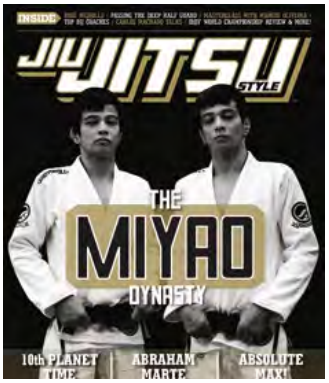

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REVIEW CORNER

TATAMI FIGHTWEAR OMEGA BACKPACK

AVAILABLE FOR £40 VIA WWWTATAMIFIGHTWEAR.COM

Tatami Fightwear's latest backpack, the Omega, looks and feels like a product that could easily have been created by North Face or Berghaus – it's an absolute beast of a bag!

On first impressions, we were really impressed with the subtle black on black styling, with the main logos on the front panels looking extremely slick. When you turn the bag around to look at the straps and support, you get a feel for the work that's gone into making sure this is comfy to wear for as long as you need. The inclusion of a series of padded areas to support your shoulders and waist do a fantastic job to keep you pain free when wearing the backpack for prolonged periods of time.

In terms of the bag's capacity, it's a perfect size for an everyday training option. There's a large main compartment - perfect for a gi, towel and other accessories - as well as a drinks holder and expandable bottom compartment. It's the bottom section that comes in most handy post-training, as it's equipped with a wet pocket for all your sweaty gear, making it easy to keep away from your clean clothing in the main compartment.

This is easily Tatami Fightwear's most premium backpack offering, which will suit travelling jiu jitsu enthusiasts perfectly. If you're looking for a bigger, holdall style bag, do check their website for other offerings, such as the Tatami Meiyo large gear bag.

'30 DIRTY' BY SEBASTIAN BROSCHE

AVAILABLE AS A DIGITAL DOWNLOAD FOR $30 VIA WWW.30DIRTY.COM

Sebastian Brosche, best known as the brains behind Yoga for BJJ, has released what is probably one of the most fun, yet outrageous jiu jitsu instructionals we've ever watched! Your training partners may hate you, but you're going to love this content, and there is some absolute gold in there.

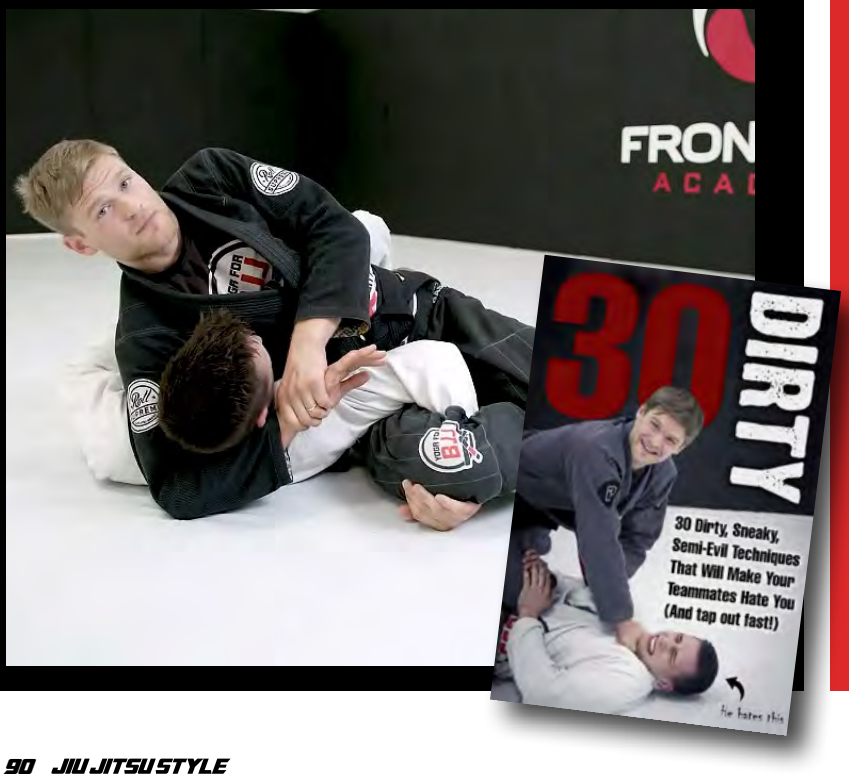
Once you've purchased the product, you gain access to a direct digital download to watch how you choose. The series runs at just over 90 minutes, with 30 techniques via Sebastian and 5 bonus techniques via Miha Perhavec.

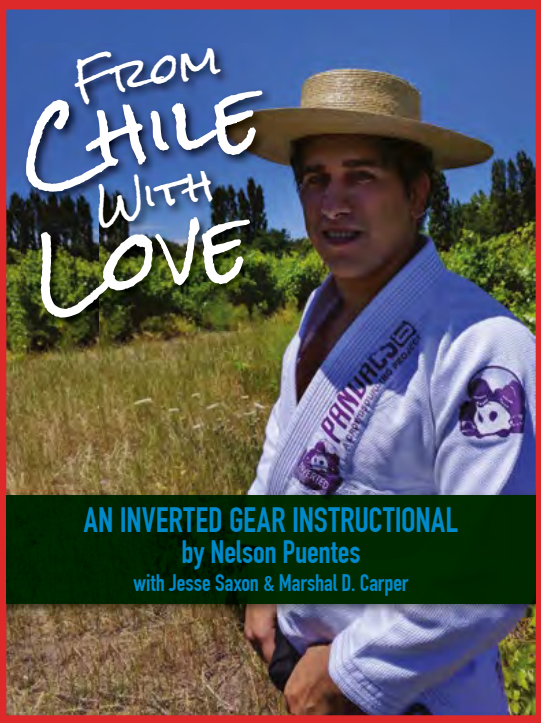
The full technique is as follows:

1. Evil side control
2. Kick in the chest from butterfly
3. Gollum choke
4. Reverse throttle choke
5. Closed guard wrist lock
6. Fist choke from closed guard
7. Closed guard Ezekiel
8. Stomper
9. Lapel choke from back mount
10. Ankle breaker counter from back mount
11. Ballkicker leg defence
12. Ezekiel fistchoke mount top half guard + bonus
13. Guillotine guard pass
14. Thumb down throatfist from top half guard
15. Step on bicep closed guard pass
16. Renzo Gracie's friendly position
17. Bulldozer
18. Boston crab & illegal version
19. Knee on throat
20. Nasty body triangle
21. The James Bond choke
22. Scarfhold neck crank
23. Scarfhold Americana
24. Sneaky lapel Ezekiel
25. Wristlock trap from closed guard
26. F@&k you footlock
27. Ankle lock counter to side control escape
28. Trond side control wristlock
29. Buggy choke
30. Reverse buggy choke
31. Kneebar footlock from x-guard
32. Miha judo alternative
33. Knee shield kimura
34. Knee shield kneebar
35. Kneebar attack open guard

The content includes a great range of 'alternative' options from a wide variety of positions. As Sebastian says, "these aren't illegal techniques, or non sportsman-like techniques. These are things you can do to your friends, and they'll still be your friends."

Both Sebastian and Miha offer clear and concise description when talking you through the techniques, and the audio and camera angles work great to make sure you pick up all the key details. For a one off payment of $30, we're sure you'll take a few of these techniques into your training.





NELSON PUENTES: FROM CHILE WITH LOVE INSTRUCTIONAL

AVAILABLE ONLINE FOR $45 VIA WWW.ARTECHOKEMEDIA.COM

As the founding panda of Inverted Gear, Nelson Puentes has had the opportunity to travel the world to train grappling. His style, while rooted in Brazilian jiu jitsu, gladly incorporates influences from wrestling, judo, and sambo. In this multimedia rich, in-depth online instructional, Nelson explores his favourite grappling concepts and discusses how philosophies and ideas from beyond jiu-jitsu have made him a better grappler. Though this instructional covers a range of positions, from takedowns to half guard, Nelson weaves key themes throughout his instruction so that even seemingly different positions connect and relate.

The Artechoke Media website offers a very unique experience compared to other jiu jitsu instructional websites. The content is a mix of written word, animated GIF files, as well as regular video media. The content is organised into chapters, which the user is able to mark as completed, making it easy to keep track of your progress through the series. This really is a great detail that made the whole user experience that much more enjoyable.

When it comes to the actual content Nelson offers up within this series, it is absolutely VAST; there's enough here to keep you busy for a long, long time. This is an all encompassing look at Nelson's approach to jiu jitsu, who's chosen not to focus in on one specific series of techniques.

Chapters include:

Introduction
Chapter 1: Takedowns - Why Russians Do It Better
Chapter 2: Folding Pass - All Roads Lead to the Folding Pass
Chapter 3: Closed Guard - Victory Concepts from Your Back
Chapter 4: Shin-on-Shin Guard - Applying Advanced Concepts
Chapter 5: Half Guard - A Leg and a Prayer
Conclusion: What Next?

Each of the above chapters includes a vast array of techniques, taking the total tally up and around the 60 video mark. We were really impressed with Nelson's teaching style and ability to break down each position or concept easily; we'd really recommend this as an awesome instructional for people looking to get a general feel for a wide range of grappling positions and situations.

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GI SPOTLIGHT | TATAMI FIGHTWEAR MAPLE KOI KIMONO

OVERVIEW

Following on from their successful Japan series rashguards, Tatami Fightwear have released this beautifully detailed, eye-catching kimono. The Maple Koi will be a sure-fire hit with fans of Japanese culture and Tatami Fightwear's high durability products.

THE JACKET

On first inspection, this is probably our favourite Tatami Fightwear kimono to date. The Japanese inspired aesthetics start on the exterior of the product, with kanji running down the right side of the jacket, as well as lotus flower-esque logos present on the lower left skirt section and both shoulders. The black colouring is offset nicely by red contrast stitching, while the trademark Tatami Fightwear logos – best known from their Estilo range – give an instant sense of quality.

The real selling point of this product lies inside the jacket, with beautifully designed koi carp artwork featuring on the inner jacket panels. The orange, black and red colouring is just stunning, Tatami Fightwear having commissioned Black Gold Tattoo studio to create this key feature for the kimono.

In terms of the fit, as you'd expect, it's about as perfect as it can get; these boys really do know how to craft a kimono. The jacket showed minimal shrinkage, showed no signs of wear and tear after a month of testing and wil no doubt serve well as an everyday product.

TROUSERS

We are a big fan of Tatami Fighwear's trousers; they never seem to rip, their sizing is always true, and the belt loop system isn't over complicated. The Maple Koi pants include the same kanji on the upper left leg as seen on the jacket, while the red contrast stitching looks great on the reinforced knee section. All in all, there are no surprises here, just a solid, reliable pair of trousers that fit great.

DETAILS

The obvious detailing of note here is the koi illustration on the inside of the jacket, and we can't stress how well the design pops – it just looks fantastic. Having hired a tattoo artist to collaborate on this kimono, they've really nailed the aesthetics, from the general styling to the colouring. It is worth noting that this gi is just one of two releases within Tatami Fightwear's 'Japan Series'. If you're more of a fan of white products, you should check out their Samurai gi.

SUMMARY

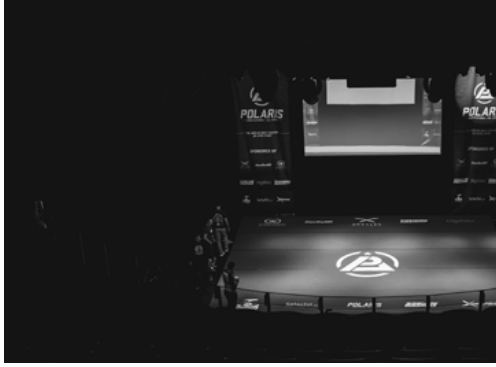
This is another cracking release from one of the best companies in the industry. It's fun to wear, amazing to look at and built with all the hallmark quality we've come to expect from Tatami Fightwear. Coming in at £110, it's a relatively pricey gi, but that's a fair price for what you're getting.

AVAILABLE VIA

WWW.TATAMIFIGHTWEAR.COM

FOR £110

PICTURES: LUKE JARVIS
WORDS: RICHARD BAKER



POLARIS PRO 5

The UK's premier grappling event, Polaris Pro, recently held its fifth rendition at the sold out Indigo O2 Arena in London. With a stacked card from top to bottom, Polaris proved once again why it is king of the hill in the European grappling scene, its stature given increased validity having been broadcast via UFC Fight Pass.

FFION DAVIES VS ELVIRA KARPPINEN

WINNER: FFION DAVIES VIA REFEREE DECISION

The first match of the preliminary card pitched Welsh star Ffion Davies against Elvira Karppinen. Ffion set a pace throughout the match that few could keep up with. She passed Elvira's guard, took her back and hit knee-on-belly, all thanks to her intense pressure.All the while Elvira, a 10th Planet stand-out, was looking for leg locks but came up short. She came close on a heel of Ffion's but the Welsh girl managed to stay calm and collected, and used the attempt to take her opponent's back. As Elvira escaped Ffion looked for a toe hold, thus giving up her own foot to Elvira in the dying seconds of the match, but it was too little too late. Ffion's intense pressure and control got her the nod from the judges at the end of the ten-minute bout.

JAMIE SCOTT VS THOMAS SIMOLA

WINNER: THOMAS SIMOLA VIA REFEREE DECISION

10th Planet London's Jamie Scott sat to butterfly guard almost immediately as the bout started. Thomas very nearly passed Jamie's guard instantly, who inverted to retain the position. Throughout the match, Thomas managed to get to side control a couple of times and even took Jamie's back at one point, but he failed to pull off a submission. Jamie hit a last minute gogoplata attack in the dying thirty seconds of the match, but to no avail. Thanks to his non-stop passing pressure, Simola got the nod from the judges.

RIVER DILLON VS MIHA PERHAVEC

WINNER: MIHA PERHAVEC VIA HEEL HOOK

Carlson Gracie standout, River Dillon, jumped guard on the leaner, taller Perhavec after some pushing and shoving in the first ten seconds. Miha recognised the position and immediately hopped off the floor, wrapping his legs round River's and landing almost perfectly in a heel hook position. River attempted to clear the knee line and re-adjust, first by rolling away and then by inverting. In failing this, he rolled too far the wrong way enabling Perhavec to adjust his grip, clamp down on the heel and tighten the submission, causing River to yelp as his knee contorted badly. Perhavec won by heel hook in under a minute.

BRADLEY HILL VS TOMMI PULKKANEN

WINNER: BRADLEY HILL VIA REFEREE DECISION

Braulio Estima black belt, Bradley Hill, attempted the almost impossible task of getting past Tommi Pulkkanen's renowned flexible guard. Thanks to the spaghetti legged competitor's inversion game, Bradley's pass attempts seemed stifled for the majority of the match. Bradley was forced into playing a very tight, heavy-pressure style of passing, while avoiding the leg attacks from Tommi. Hill attempted several Estima locks as Pulkkanen put his own feet in harm's way while inverting, in a back and forth battle of heel hooks and Caio Terra foot locks.

Both competitors came close, but Pulkkanen's leg dexterity and Hill's technical experience meant that no-one could get the finish. Hill got the nod from the judges' scorecard thanks to his constant passing and submission attempts whenever possible.

MASAKAZU IMANARI VS VALMYR NETO

WINNER: MASAKAZU IMANARI VIA HEEL HOOK

This was the stand-out bout of the prelims and one can only think Imanari wasn't on the main card in the hope that this match would draw people into watching the main card over on UFC Fight Pass.

Imanari immediately sat to guard as Neto happily played a tight top game in an attempt to pass. At the halfway mark of the bout, Imanari managed to get the elevation required to wrap his legs around Neto's leg and constrict on his knee. Neto valiantly escaped the sub attempt but Imanari kept hold of the foot, stood up into a leg drag before taking a deeper position, this time on the opposite leg of Neto, who attempted to escape by rolling out. Not fazed by the Brazilian, Imanari kept hold and got the tap via inverted heel hook.

SAM COOK VS VANESSA ENGLISH

WINNER: SAM COOK VIA REFEREE DECISION

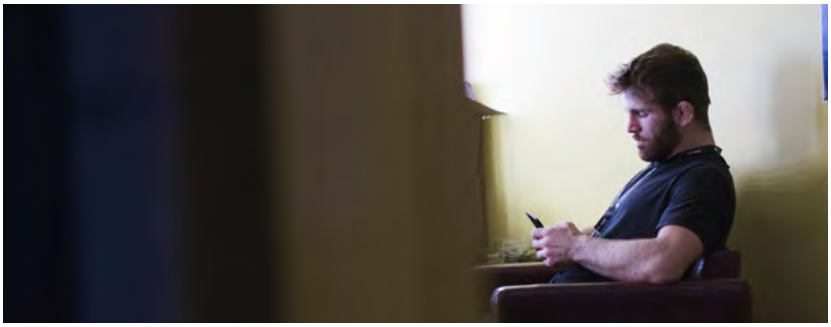
Our first gi match of the night brought together two of the very top UK female black belts. It took Vanessa to attempt a flying triangle to get the match to the ground. Vanessa stayed on her back for the majority of the fight, often threatening with a variety of foot locks, but Sam stayed cool and collected and attempted to pass, using her weight advantage and pressure to keep Vanessa at bay. Sam managed to hit a nice single leg towards the end of the fight, which may have helped the judges decide on her victory in a tough back and forth battle between the two.

ROSS NICHOLLS VS OLIVER TAZA

WINNER: OLIVER TAZA VIA REFEREE DECISION

In this re-match (previously Nicholls had lost via heel hook to the Tristar / Danaher Death Squad prodigy, Taza), Nicholls showed that he has vastly improved. In one of the most technical yet fast paced matches of the night, the back and forth scrambles, pass attempts, sweeps and escapes made for a fascinating jiu jitsu match.

Overall, Taza had the positional dominance of the match, almost taking Nicholls' back a few times. He used Kimura traps and guillotines to set up some slick guard pass attempts too. Nicholls was no slouch either, relentlessly attempting heel hooks and passing Taza's guard early in the match. The judges gave the edge to Taza in a close match that I'd happily see again.



AJ AGAZARM VS LLOYD COOPER

WINNER: AJ AGAZARM VIA CHOKE

In a match that was originally put together thanks to Cooper's clever utilisation of social media, we saw the King of the North attempting to defend his throne against the outspoken Polaris veteran, AJ Agazarm. Lloyd talked a lot in the build up about hitting a foot lock on AJ and displaying his limbs neatly on his fireplace in his Yorkshire home, but it wasn't to be, though not through lack of trying.

Lloyd attempted several foot lock attempts as AJ kept a tight passing game. He used Lloyd's lapels against him, both off his back and from on top, to keep control. He eventually forced a scramble from Lloyd and managed to get him to turtle. Cooper paused for just a split second, but it was enough for the American to smell blood and dive on a back take. With both hooks in, and one hand underneath Lloyd's arm holding the far side lapel, AJ adjusted his hips as you would for a bow and arrow choke, doubled down on the gi grip of the Yorkshire man and got the tap. The brash American claimed his seat as the new King of the North, though judging by the northern support for Cooper in the crowd, it won't take long for a mutiny to remove him.

CAOL UNO VS VITOR SHAOLIN RIBEIRO

WINNER: VITOR SHAOLIN RIBEIRO VIA CHOKE

In what could be the match of the night, two legends of the combat sports world collided. As the two met on the mats, Shaolin sat to guard almost immediately. Uno used pressure to try and gain a pass on Ribeiro, but his cool head and technique prevailed. Shaolin reversed Uno's top position using a single leg attack, passed his guard and went for the back. Switching tactics, he attempted to hit a triangle from the top, and as Uno was forced to lean back to alleviate the pressure, he ended up in a very, very tight arm bar position that most human beings would have tapped from. Not Caol Uno though. He managed to arch his back, hips-up off the floor and spring over Shaolin like a cat to escape the position.

As Uno attempted a pass he was elevated by Shaolin, flipped over and forced to turtle. Shaolin snatched the opportunity to take the back. During a frantic scramble, Shaolin managed to get his hooks in and Uno, for a split second, tried to use one of his arms to push off a hook, which was all the time Shaolin needed to slide his forearm under his neck. Securing the tight grip, Ribeiro held the modified RNC grip on, until Uno, being the warrior he is, simply goes to sleep instead of tapping. Ribeiro got the win via a simply masterful display of jiu jitsu.

BRAD PICKETT VS PHIL HARRIS

WINNER: PHIL HARRIS VIA REFEREE DECISION

Continuing our theme of MMA legends, Brad Pickett and Phil Harris stepped onto the mats in a no-gi match, where neither fighter really managed to get anything going. The majority of the fifteen minutes took place in Phil Harris' guard, visibly frustrating Brad Pickett at some points.

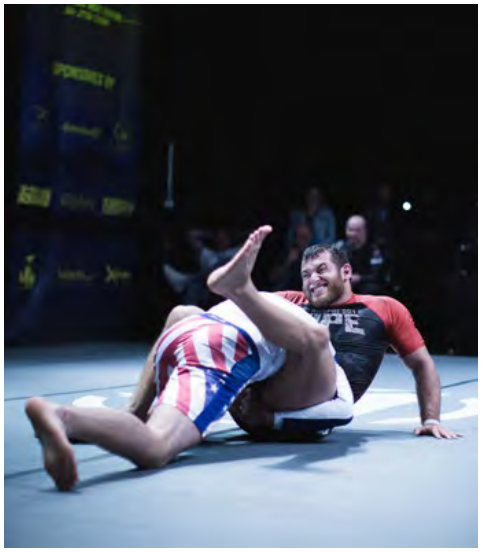
Harris seemed to be the more active from his back, though Pickett landed a beautiful double leg from which Harris attempted to latch onto a guillotine, yet was unsuccessful. Pickett slammed Harris during the match, giving up a point in doing so, which led to Harris getting a split decision that, in my eyes, could have gone either way.

JAKE SHIELDS VS DAN STRAUSS

WINNER: JAKE SHIELDS VIA REFEREE DECISION

Home town hero, Dan Strauss, returned to Polaris to take on UFC & MMA legend, Jake Shields; a Cesar Gracie blackbelt who holds MMA wins over the likes of Demian Maia and current welterweight champ Tyron Woodley. Strauss pulled his signature butterfly guard on the NCAA wrestler, who sprawled to negate the effectiveness of the guard. Shields' uber-tight passing game and Strauss' incredibly strong guard seemed to cancel each other out for the majority of the match. For some time, neither grappler could get any advantage over the other.

Seven minutes in, Shields managed to pass Strauss' guard and kept him in side control for a short while until Strauss used his heavy frame to reclaim his guard. With two minutes left Shields escaped the clamping guard of Strauss. They clinched, and in the last thirty seconds the American shot a single leg successfully as Strauss attempted a guillotine, which he couldn't finish. Thanks to his pass, and last minute single leg, Shields got the nod from the judges after fifteen minutes.



GARRY TONON VS DILLON DANIS

WINNER: GARRY TONON VIA REFEREE DECISION

This was final bout of the night, a re-match from the 2015 ADCC Championships in which Danis had his knee visibly injured. The build up to this match had been great fun. From Tonon mocking Danis by dying his hair and getting Henna tattoos, to Danis naming the whole of the Danaher Death Squad 'one trick ponies' and getting in Garry's face during weigh-ins, the promoters had not been short on content for this one. Tonon's relentless pace during the match was admirable. He's the type of competitor all our coaches want us to be, constantly pushing forward.

Tonon landed some nice takedowns against Danis and latched onto his heels like a bear trap several times to try and set up one of his signature leg lock attacks. Danis managed to escape them all explosively; you can only imagine how much he didn't want to get caught in another one of Tonon's knee-popping heel hooks. Given the space to work, Danis attempted a variety of technical passes on the Renzo Gracie black belt, and almost hit a very nice rolling back take. The match went the full fifteen minutes at a furious pace, and Tonon received the judges' nod thanks to his furious pace and relentless pressure. With both men eyeing a career in MMA and an obvious grudge, could we be seeing these two go at it in a cage in the future?

WORDS: MATT BENYON

WHERE ARE WE GOING WITH ALL THIS?

We recently wrapped up Polaris Pro 5, which marked the first time the pro grappling event had been held in our capital.

It was an important event in more ways than one - firstly, we sold out the Indigo at the O2, which was an incredible achievement and a big risk for us - holding events in London is considerably more expensive than doing it in our own back yard. We have you, the UK and European grappling fans, to thank for the success of the show.

Secondly, it was our first event to be broadcast on UFC Fight Pass. This was another great milestone for our show, and for professional jiu jitsu as a sport. The team at Fight Pass were very happy with how the show panned out and the viewer numbers achieved, setting us up for a much bigger, better and busier 2017. We had a number of amazing matches - my personal highlight being Vitor Shaolin vs Caol Uno. Perhaps it's my nostalgia for the Pride days, but having a Japanese fighter on the card always adds something special to the proceedings, and with Shaolin's storied history against the Japanese, to watch that match unfold from the side of the stage was a privilege.

I managed to keep my promise to myself not to analyse social media too deeply following the show. Fans can rest assured that any criticism you can level at us is already being worked on - we are keenly aware of all the areas that can be improved to further the chance of professional jiu jitsu becoming a legitimate aspect of sports entertainment, and for Polaris to be the world leader in that market.

"PRO JIU JITSU STILL NEEDS TO FIND ITS FOOTING IN THE SPORTS WORLD. ARE WE AN ATHLETIC EVENT? AN ENTERTAINMENT EVENT? A COMBAT SPORT? A HYBRID?"

The combat sports market is very much owned by the UFC and mixed martial arts at the moment, to the extent that many fans are crossover fans from MMA. Many of those same fans who boo fighters when the match hits the ground will tune into pro grappling only to be disappointed by what they see. This is a natural phase in our evolution, until the pure grappling fans grow in numbers and gain a louder voice.

Looking around the auditorium that Saturday night, I saw a crowd who loved grappling, including a group who loved beer just as much and did their best to spoil any atmosphere of reverence and respect that may have been built up over the night. I do not believe Polaris has quite hit the magic formula just yet but we are very close. We were right to move the show to London, but perhaps the Indigo was not the best venue. We thought having easy access to the bar would mean people would spend less time queuing for drinks and more time enjoying matches - instead, drinking became the main focus for many. The location, while convenient compared to Poole or Cardiff, could be improved.

Recently, the World Championships of Athletics was held in London. I watched some on TV. After days of competing, the show reached fever pitch with the one hundred metre sprint. Tens of thousands of people crowded into the arena, hundreds of TV cameras pointed towards a row of glistening athletes… Every viewer on tenterhooks simply to find out who could run the fastest.

I thought again, then, as I have many times, that professional grappling can be huge. There are some who say that the rules will ultimately prevent the masses from ever tuning in, but at its most basic, grappling is the physical dominance of one competitor over another. This is universal and can be understood by all. With our amazing commentary team, a lively crowd, insightful matchmaking and most importantly, two game competitors, you can show the uninitiated a match and they will be entertained. There is no better example of this than Rousimar Palhares vs Garry Tonon, from Polaris 3. You do not need to understand the intricacies of an inside heel hook to appreciate the battle that went down that night. Garry came out and threw down with an absolute beast of a man, and the result was 15 minutes of non-stop action.

Pro jiu jitsu still needs to find its footing in the sports world. Are we an athletic event? An entertainment event? A combat sport? A hybrid? Should we present the show on a theatrical stage, or in an arena? These are all questions we will find answers to, one show at a time, but we have full confidence that grappling fans will find something to enjoy in each show regardless. After all, all we really need are two fighters and some mats for magic to happen.

Matt Benyon
Creative Director
Polaris Pro & Scramble Brand

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